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Free to Deployed Areas

Inside

MIDEAST

5 militants killed in brazen Taliban attack on Kabul airport

Page 3



MLB

After strong 1st half, A's, Giants give hope for Bay Bridge Series

Back page



MIDEAST

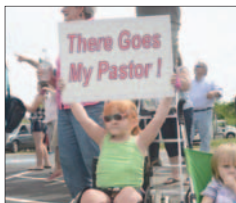
Bases in Afghanistan left with fire-prone buildings, IG says

Page 3

FAITH

Fighter pilot trades in wings for calling as Maine church pastor

Page 19



Airliner shot down over Ukraine

Malaysian jet carrying 295 reportedly crashes in east; no responsibility claimed

By PETER LEONARD
The Associated Press

GRABOVO, Ukraine — Ukraine said a passenger plane carrying 295 people was shot down Thursday as it flew over the country, and both the government and the pro-Russia separatists fighting in the region denied any responsibility

for downing the plane.

As plumes of black smoke rose near the rebel-held village of Grabovo in eastern Ukraine, an Associated Press journalist counted at least 22 bodies at the crash site 25 miles from the Russian border.

The plane appeared to have broken up before impact and

the burning wreckage — including body parts and the belongings of passengers — was scattered over a wide area.

Malaysia Airlines tweeted that it lost contact with one of its flights carrying 280 passengers and 15 crew as it was traveling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur over Ukrainian

airspace, but did not yet confirm the crash.

CNN reported that 23 Americans were on board.

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko called the downing an act of terrorism and called for an international investigation into the crash.

SEE AIRLINER ON PAGE 12



‘WE THOUGHT THIS WAS IT’

Rescuers narrowly save 2 airmen caught in Okinawa flash flood

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Airmen Brandon Miles and Roderick Jones could only laugh as the floodwaters filled their guard shack in the aftermath of Typhoon Neoguri last week.

They had already torn through the drywall and moved into the ceiling, re-

moving some metal brackets and clawing through a layer of foam.

As they looked at the reinforced concrete roof just above their heads, then down at the rising waters, they knew that escaping was out of their hands.

They had about a foot of air space left, and it was shrinking.

SEE RESCUE ON PAGE 4

Airman 1st Class Brandon Miles, left, and Airman 1st Class Roderick Jones. MATTHEW M. BURKE/Stars and Stripes



Courtesy of Kadema Air Base

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The firing never stopped. They were trying to kill (the officers), no doubt."

—Stockton, Calif., Police Chief Eric Jones, after a deadly daytime shootout with bank robbers who took three hostages.

See story on Page 9

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2. Both sides in Ukraine deny shooting down Malaysian plane
3. Marine Corps transfers whistleblower who questioned top general
4. Bataan visits Bahrain after 135 days at sea
5. Kadena rescuers save two airmen caught in flash flood

COMING SOON

Music
Songs of the summer



TODAY IN STRIPES

American Roundup	17
Business	20
Comics	21
Crossword	21
Faces	18
Faith	19
Opinion	22-23
Sports	24-25
Weather	20

MILITARY



Trevor T. McBride/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

On the way down to Africa

Airmen from the 48th Security Forces Squadron leave RAF Lakenheath, England, on a C-130 Hercules on Wednesday to deploy to Djibouti. The airmen are to provide security and protection to Air Force assets.

F-15 departure from Europe may be delayed

By JENNIFER H. SVAN
Stars and Stripes

The Pentagon may delay the planned withdrawal of U.S. Air Force F-15C fighter jets from Europe, and possibly increase aircraft rotations to the continent, as part of an effort to reassure allies and boost assistance to the region in the wake of Russia's recent aggression in Ukraine, officials told members of Congress Wednesday.

In testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, Pentagon leaders were pressed to provide more details about the White

House's "Europe Reassurance Initiative," a \$1 billion funding plan announced by the White House in June. The subject of Wednesday's hearing was the Pentagon's fiscal 2015 overseas contingency operations budget request for \$58.6 billion. Money for the new European mission is part of that request.

Indications that the Defense Department may reconsider removing some of its F-15C aircraft from Europe come less than a month after Gen. Philip Breedlove, commander of U.S. European Command and North Atlantic Treaty Organization Supreme Allied Command, told reporters at the Pentagon that he expected to see reductions to the F-15 force in Europe.

Breedlove's statement followed an Air Force announcement in March that it wants to retire 51 F-15C Eagles, including 21 based overseas, starting in fiscal 2015. In Europe, there are 21 F-15Cs assigned to RAF Lakenheath, England, serving with the 493rd Fighter Squadron.

But the recent flare-up of ten-

sions in eastern Europe, fanned by the Russian takeover of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula, has set U.S. allies in the region on edge and forced the United States to rethink and reprioritize its defense strategy in Europe.

Part of that may involve keeping F-15Cs in Europe for longer. The aircraft in May concluded a four-month Baltic air-policing mission while deployed to Lithuania. The mission was augmented in March after the crisis between Russia and Ukraine broke out.

Adm. James Winnefeld, Jr., the Joint Chiefs of Staff vice chairman, told the committee Wednesday that the DOD's primary budget "was submitted before any of this happened," referring to this crisis in eastern Europe. "So this is essentially trying to recover from that, quite honestly. There are initiatives we need to do to support particularly our eastern European partners, who are not quite as strong as our western European partners from a defense perspective."

Of the \$1 billion being sought

for Europe, \$925 million would be set aside for the Defense Department and would be available for two years.

The Pentagon would use about \$440 million to rotate elements of an Army armored brigade combat team into Europe; provide additional funds for expanded naval deployments in the Black and Baltic Seas; continue with NATO air policing in the Baltic region, and either temporarily delay withdrawal of Air Force F-15C aircraft from Europe or increase aircraft rotations to Europe, according to a prepared statement Secretary of Defense Bob Work submitted to the committee.

About \$75 million would go toward conducting more NATO exercises and training with allies and partners; \$250 million for infrastructure upgrades in central and eastern Europe, and \$125 million for prepositioning of U.S. equipment, according to Work's statement.

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Correction

An accompanying quotation in a July 17 story about the USS Bataan's visit to Bahrain misidentified Cpl. David Jones as a USS Bataan sailor. Jones is a Marine.

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MIDEAST

Afghan bases left with fire issues, IG warns

By ERNESTO LONDONO
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — In a hurry to finish installations for Afghan forces before the end of the year, the Army Corps of Engineers is leaving behind hundreds of buildings that were built with materials that make them prone to catch fire, the inspector general with oversight for U.S. reconstruction efforts warned in a letter Thursday.

That fact alone alarmed John Sopko, the inspector general for Afghanistan reconstruction. But he was incensed by the rationale offered by one Army general who said the military was unable to retrofit all of the buildings.

"The typical occupied populations for these facilities are young, fit, Afghan soldiers and recruits who have the physical ability to make a hasty retreat during a developing situation," Maj. Gen. Michael Eyre, deputy commander of the Army Corps' Transatlantic Division, wrote in a memo.

Sopko, whose confrontational style and widely publicized audits have made him somewhat radioactive in government circles, criticized the Army Corps for leaving behind unsafe buildings and for the money it has had to spend upgrading others.

"I am very troubled by such logic, which seems to argue that fire hazards for a building are somehow remedied by the youthful speed and vigor of the occupants," Sopko wrote in a June 9 letter that his agency made public Thursday. "This logic pales in light of not only the speed with which these buildings will be consumed by fire as well as the fact that a number of the buildings in question are infirmaries and sleeping quarters."

The fire-prone buildings are among 1,592 arch-shaped structures the Army was commissioned to build at military bases around the country as part of a \$1.57 billion effort.

Of those, only 507 were initially built using materials that meet a global safety standard known as the International Build-

ing Code.

The Army is taking steps to make fixes to 800 of the facilities to bring them up to standard. But it expects that 285 will remain noncompliant because of the type of insulation foam contractors installed in the buildings.

Col. Richard Heitkamp, the Army Corps' Transatlantic Division commander, said in a statement that the officials have added "further fire protection to mitigate the potential risk."

The buildings, he noted, have "additional egress points."

Two of the buildings were engulfed in flames quickly while they were built. Army officials said those cases were the result of "hot work by the contractor."

Heitkamp said his team in Afghanistan is conducting an independent review to ensure that remediation efforts are sufficient.

The Office of the Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction first raised concerns about the buildings in early April

2013, calling the use of spray polyurethane foam insulation systems a "significant fire hazard." Later that month, Army officials agreed to cease using the insulation foam in new buildings and pledged they would bring all into compliance.

But early this year, Army officials began transferring buildings that were built with the deficient materials over to the Afghans, citing the urgency of finishing the military installations for a force that has taken on the brunt of the fight in Afghanistan as the U.S. military footprint has thinned out.

The threat of fire at Afghan military bases is high because they often get attacked with artillery and many have power grids or generators that deliver unsteady electricity.

"USACE's apparent failure to enforce its own contract requirements seems to have resulted in tens of millions of dollars in additional costs and significant construction delays," Sopko wrote.

5 attackers killed in Taliban raid on Kabul airport

By JOSH SMITH
Stars and Stripes

KABUL — The Taliban claimed responsibility for a brazen attack on the Kabul International Airport on Thursday that inflicted little damage but diverted flights and sent the sound of gunfire and explosions rolling across the city for hours.

All five attackers died during close-quarters fighting that lasted about five hours after the attack began about 4 a.m. Four of the insurgents were killed by security forces, while the fifth detonated a suicide vest, police said. Afghan officials said their forces sustained no casualties.

The airport attackers used a truck bomb to blast their way through a fence and into an area near the airport where high-rise apartment buildings are being built, officials said. From the upper levels of one unoccupied structure, the militants opened fire on the nearby military base, also located on the airport grounds.

Officials with the Afghan Air Force said none of their aircraft were damaged during the attack, but aviation authorities grounded and diverted civilian flights until after the fighting ended.

As Afghan government forces left the scene, they were cheered on by a crowd of residents. But the good will dissipated as police unsuccessfully tried to stop the crowd from tearing apart the remains of the truck bomb for scrap. Police fired shots in the air as the crowd surged forward.

Attacks on the airport have become something of a regular occurrence in recent weeks, with insurgents often firing rockets at it. The raid on Thursday was unusual because it involved a ground attack by Taliban fighters.

On Tuesday a car bomb killed 43 people and wounded at least 74 in the eastern province of Pakitika. On the same day a roadside bomb in Kabul left two presidential palace staffers dead.

The attacks come amid a tense political period as Afghans attempt to resolve a disputed presidential election. On Thursday election officials and international observers began an unprecedented recount of ballots from the second round of voting.

Zubair Babakarkhail contributed to this report.
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Above: A member of the Afghan police Crisis Response Unit secures the scene after a truck bomb was used to blow a hole in the fence surrounding partially constructed buildings near Kabul International Airport on Thursday. After the explosion, Taliban insurgents gained access to the site and used a building to launch an attack on the airport before being killed by security forces. Left: An Afghan policeman leaves the building where four Taliban militants lay dead after the firefight near the airport.

JOSH SMITH/Stars and Stripes

MILITARY

Rescue: Airmen trapped in 'rush of water'

FROM FRONT PAGE

"That's all it was, was praying," Miles said Monday, still trying to process their dramatic rescue. "Praying and motivating. Trying to calm each other down."

The two airmen first class in the 18th Security Forces Squadron had stayed home as Neoguri pummeled Okinawa on July 8, then headed to guard duty at Kadena Air Base's munitions gate at 10:30 p.m. as the worst of the storm passed and headed toward the Japanese mainland.

But heavy bands of rain continued to pound the area, the total at Kadena would reach 37 inches.

"It started raining again as we got on shift," Jones recalled.

They hadn't seen a car in hours when they noticed water was creeping up to their door about 6 a.m.

"All of a sudden, we just heard a rush of water," Miles recalled Monday.

By then, it was too late to flee. A river the two friends couldn't see behind the guard shack had flooded, sending a cascade of water toward them. It met water coming from a bridge in front of them.

The surging water started climbing up the outside of the walls and quickly seeped into the 10-foot-by-5-foot building. The men called it in and got ready to leave.

But "the water pressure had



Rescuers cut a hole through a reinforced concrete roof.

kept the door closed," Miles said. All the roads in the area had flooded, so rescuers had trouble finding a route to the shack, said Master Sgt. Brad Reeves, who was among the first group of security forces and firefighters to arrive.

As lightning flashed overhead, bolt cutters took care of the lock, and the rescuers swam to the guard shack. They dove down and tried unsuccessfully to break the glass and to open the door. Jones and Miles tried to shoot out the windows. No luck.

A rope was tied off on high ground and was attached to the roof of the shack so the rescuers could transport tools to cut a hole.

"The water level was 10 feet high," Reeves said.

Inside, Jones and Miles tried their best to stay calm.

"I would freak out and he would freak me down, and he would freak out and I would calm him down," Miles said. "We both had our points where we thought this was it."

Jones head-butted the sheet rock ceiling and made an indentation. Miles began clawing at it. Jones helped him make a hole and they began pulling it down. They moved up into the ceiling, buying time as the water poured in. But their hearts sank when they hit the reinforced concrete roof.

Outside, assistant fire chief Master Sgt. Aaron Duggins and Tech Sgt. Joseph Flores of the 18th Civil Engineer Squadron arrived, carrying a K-12 fire rescue saw to cut a hole in the roof.

"We try to be optimistic and a lot of times, at last we'll do whatever it takes at all costs and we're always going to be successful, but the reality is in our profes-



Photos courtesy of Kadena Air Base

It took rescuers about 45 minutes to free two airmen trapped inside a guard shack July 9 during a flash flood on Kadena Air Base, Okinawa.

sion we're not always successful," Duggins said. "I was not 100 percent convinced that we had enough time to get it done."

Rescuers were starting to make progress on the roof when the saw's internal belt disintegrated, rendering it useless. So they grabbed axes and sledgehammers and frantically tried to smash through. It was tough going.

The airmen told jokes and prayed as their prospects looked increasingly grim.

Suddenly, Jones and Miles saw light above, but the hole wasn't big enough to crawl through. Duggins considered fashioning snorkels for the two men out of radiator hoses from a fire truck. Jones and Miles cheered their rescuers on the rest of the way.

Jones was the second to be pulled out about 8 a.m. His nose was against the ceiling and he had about an inch of air left at the

time. Duggins said that within minutes, the shack was completely submerged.

"None of the rescuers on scene had life jackets; we didn't have helmets; we didn't have scuba equipment; we didn't have snorkels, and so these rescuers who showed up that day put their lives on the line to save these two guys," Duggins said.

Miles and Jones said they can't believe how close to death they were. They laugh about it now — just as they did then — but mostly because they don't know what else to do.

Jones said they are trying to go around the base to personally thank each rescuer.

"Sometimes he'll just look at me and shake his head, and I'm like, 'Nothing but God bro, nothing but it,'" Miles said. "We're blessed."

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AF secretary in England at bases facing closure

By ADAM L. MATHIS
Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — Secretary of the Air Force Deborah James is on a tour of bases in England, some of which have uncertain futures.

James first stopped at the Farnborough International Airshow near London earlier this week, where she met with U.S. service members. The show provides a meeting ground for defense contractors and potential buyers. Transactions totaling more than \$70 billion were arranged at the 2012 show, according to air show officials.

She arrived at RAF Mildenhall on Wednesday and also was to visit RAFs Alconbury, Molesworth and Lakenheath.

The tour gives her a chance to meet airmen and to view base operations, said Capt. Christina Sukach, a spokeswoman for James.

Most of the bases James is visiting have been designated candidates for closure or reduction. The Air Force proposed in its 2015 budget request closing Alconbury and Molesworth and moving the latter's U.S. intelligence operations to RAF Croughton.

The Senate Appropriations Committee, however, wants the project delayed until the European Infrastructure Consolidation review is complete. The review,

an analysis likely to recommend additional closure and consolidation of installations in Europe, is expected soon.

Lakenheath already has been marked as a potential target of more cuts. Gen. Philip Breedlove, commander of U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, revealed in June that the consolidation review had "preliminary plans or results" to remove some F-15s from Europe. The 48th Fighter Wing at Lakenheath is the only U.S. wing with F-15s in Europe.

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MILITARY

Former Coast Guard leader gets Arctic post

By JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

A former commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard has been named the U.S. Navy's special representative for the Arctic, a newly created position formed in response to the region's growing strategic importance.

Retired Adm. Robert Papp Jr. was named to the post as the U.S. prepares to take on the chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2015.

"The Arctic has enormous and growing geostategic, economic, climate, environment and national security implications for the United States and the world, and we are, of course, delighted to welcome Adm. Papp, a distinguished and senior public servant with broad foreign policy experience," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Wednesday.

The Arctic Council is an intergovernmental group that aims to

establish guidelines for operating in the region and resolve territorial disputes between member nations. Those countries are Canada, Denmark (including Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States.

In the coming decades, shrinking sheets of ice across the Arctic Ocean are expected to open new international sea routes and potentially open access to untapped oil reserves. Those developments could drive more traffic into Arctic sea lanes as well as spark territo-



Papp

U.S. policy say the U.S. lags behind other Arctic nations and should be investing more in vessels capable

of operating in the rugged Arctic. However, the U.S. does maintain the world's most advanced fleet of submarines, which routinely patrol the Arctic and provide the Navy with a distinct advantage should tensions ever escalate into armed conflict.

Still, concerns about the region have forced the Defense Department to focus more on Arctic matters. In 2011, the DOD restructured responsibilities for the so-called High North, which was previously divided among three combatant commands. Now,

the area falls directly under U.S. Northern Command, whose area of responsibility was expanded to include the North Pole and the Bering Strait.

U.S. European Command's area was extended to include the water space of the Laptev and Eastern Siberian seas north of Russia. While NORTHCOM is the lead advocate for Arctic issues within the Defense Department, EUCCOM manages military relationships with other Arctic nations in Europe.

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Dismissal of tattoo suit urged

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The U.S. Army says a Kentucky National Guard soldier with aspirations of joining a U.S. Army special operations unit is grandfathered in under new regulations concerning soldiers with tattoos and asked a federal judge to dismiss his lawsuit.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Regina S. Edwards says in a motion that Staff Sgt. Adam C. Thorogood of Nashville, Tenn., has no legal basis for suing the Army because he hasn't been and shouldn't be harmed by the policy.

Thorogood, 28, sued Thursday in U.S. District Court in Paducah, Kentucky, seeking to have the rules declared unconstitutional and asking \$100 million in damages.

The regulations went into effect in March and ban tattoos below the knee or elbow. Soldiers who already have the ink are grandfathered in. Under the new regulations, any soldier with a tattoo is barred from seeking a promotion to warrant officer or commissioning as an officer.

Thorogood, who has 11 tattoos, spent 10 years on active duty in the Army as a decorated soldier and sniper before switching to the reserves, a move that allowed him to pursue a degree in aerospace at Middle Tennessee State University and pursue certifications in flying planes with the intention of eventually going back on active duty and seeking promotion to warrant officer.

Edwards noted that Thorogood did not apply for a warrant officer position. "Instead, he failed to apply based on initial inquiries from his recruiter and his own assessment, rather than the regulation," Edwards wrote.

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PACIFIC

Report: Radiation not to blame for sailors' ailments

By MATTHEW M. BURKE

Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — A high-ranking Defense Department official backs the contention that USS Ronald Reagan sailors were not exposed to dangerous levels of radiation in the aftermath of Japan's nuclear disaster three years ago.

In a report recently issued to Congress in response to a January directive from defense committees, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. Jonathan Woodson defended the military's response and said that safeguards put into place to protect servicemembers worked. He said any illnesses that sailors have developed are not a result of the Operation Tomodachi relief campaign.

Woodson's findings were generally in line with previous Navy and Defense Department statements regarding radiation exposure, yet divulged more detail than previously released, including information on potential potable water contamination and ailments.

"There is no objective evidence that the sailors ... experienced radiation exposures that would

result in an increase in the expected number of radiogenic diseases over time," Woodson wrote. "The estimated radiation doses for all individuals in the Operation Tomodachi registry, including sailors on the USS Ronald Reagan, were very small and well below levels associated with adverse medical conditions."

The report was issued as 111 sailors, Marines and airmen prepare for oral arguments in federal court Aug. 19 in their lawsuit against Japanese utility TEPCO. Lawyers for the plaintiffs said a California judge likely will make a ruling on TEPCO's motions to dismiss the case and to change the venue.

That suit was initiated in 2012 by a small group of Reagan sailors who alleged that TEPCO's misinformation coaxed U.S. forces closer to the affected areas and made them sick. More ailing servicemembers came forward citing exposure-related ailments such as unexplained cancers, excessive bleeding and thyroid issues, and an amended suit was filed in February.

The Reagan was dispatched to help out after a massive earthquake on March 11, 2011, spawned a tsunami that heavily damaged

the Fukushima nuclear power plant on Japan's east coast.

In the report, Woodson said there are several broad categories of diseases, complications and symptoms with "slightly" elevated incidence among the Reagan sailors compared with a control population deployed during the two preceding years. None was caused by radiation, he said.

Woodson said the rate of cancer in Reagan sailors was actually nearly 50 percent lower than in the control population. There were three cases he identified that potentially could be caused by radiation: two cases of thyroid cancer and one of nonchronic lymphocytic leukemia.

"These numbers of cases are not unusual or unexpected among a population of nearly 5,000 individuals," he wrote, adding that the symptoms developed too soon to be caused by exposure.

"The dates of diagnosis for these three cases strongly suggest that these disease processes were initiated well before OT (Operation Tomodachi) and therefore, are not causally related to low-level radiation exposures during OT."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs said the numbers don't match up with



NICHOLAS A. GROESCH/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Sailors scrub the flight deck aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan following a wash-down to decontaminate the flight deck while the ship operated off the coast of Japan in March 2011 in support of Operation Tomodachi.

the number of sick sailors involved in the suit. They claim that the report relied on incomplete and inaccurate information and that their clients were never consulted for the Tomodachi Registry, which served as the basis for many of its conclusions. They also disputed the findings regarding the ship's positioning and radiation levels, the contamination of potable water and the distribution of potassium iodide tablets.

"It is sincerely hoped that those who received this report will look beyond the scant information and ask some serious questions that haven't been answered," said attorney for the plaintiffs Paul Garner.

Referring to photographs shown to Stars and Stripes, lawyers claimed they could prove the ship was closer to the plant than the 100-mile exclusion zone that has been reported. They also said they had testimony of sailors charged with decontaminating the ship after the mission.

An academic report has claimed that the Reagan was met by radiation levels that far exceeded what Navy leadership had been told to expect by the Japanese government when it arrived off the coast on March 13.

Navy and Defense officials did not respond to requests seeking comment.

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Official: More Osprey flights coming to mainland Japan

By SETH ROBSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — Marine Corps MV-22 Ospreys will be making more flights over mainland Japan as the U.S. military tries to reduce training hours on Okinawa, where residents have protested the hybrid aircraft since before its arrival in 2012.

The Japanese government is in the process of building facilities at U.S. bases on the mainland so that "the majority of the training by the aircraft can be carried out outside Okinawa," according to comments made by Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera that were posted on the ministry's website.

The 12th arrival of the Ospreys at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma was met with fierce opposition by many people in Okinawa who were fearful that the aircraft had a less-than-stellar safety record.



D.L. FARLEY/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

A V-22 Osprey flies over Crete in 2010.

At the time, the U.S. military put on a public-relations blitz to assuage those fears, and there have been no major incidents involving the Osprey since its arrival.

Its service on mainland Japan, however, has been limited.

On Tuesday, Ospreys — which take off like helicopters, then tilt their rotors to fly like fixed-wing

aircraft — refueled at Naval Air Station Atsugi, near Tokyo, before dropping off personnel at Camp Fuji, a Marine base in Shizuoka Prefecture, officials said.

Additionally, two Ospreys are scheduled to refuel at Yokota Air Base on Saturday en route to the July 20 Sapporo Air Show, according to 374th Airlift Wing

spokesman 1st Lt. Jacob Bailey.

The Ospreys' participation in the Sapporo Air Show is aimed at raising public awareness of the aircraft, according to 1st Lt. Noah Rappahann, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force spokesman.

"We are trying to get as much visibility of the aircraft as we can, and air shows are a great opportunity to let people talk to pilots and go see the aircraft," he said.

The Ospreys are authorized to operate at all U.S. bases in Japan under the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. The mainland flights follow designated routes that are already used by other Japanese and U.S. military aircraft, Rappahann said.

Commanding general of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing Brig. Gen. Steve R. Rudder wrote in a commentary submitted this week to Stars and Stripes that the Ospreys had been used in training on mainland Japan and in South

Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Australia and Guam for more than a year.

"This reduces the amount of time the Ospreys spend in Okinawa," he said.

However, some Japanese are still concerned about the safety of the aircraft. Local media reported that rallies at Atsugi and Camp Fuji protested against the flights there, and Yokota officials have warned of possible protests outside the base in connection with this weekend's flights.

Onodera said he was aware of the lingering safety concerns.

"We will continue to prominently inform local communities involved of flight schedules as soon as we obtain the information from U.S. military," he said.

Stars and Stripes staffer Chiyoimi Sumida contributed to this report. robson.seth@stripes.com Twitter: @SethRobson1

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MILITARY

VA: Don't open 'floodgates' to private care

By TOM PHILPOTT

The ambitious push by Congress and its veterans' affairs committee to swiftly solve a health care wait-time crisis for tens of thousands of veterans by granting access to private-sector care appears to run hard aground.

After four weeks, House-Senate conferees, working through their staffs to swiftly solve a health care wait-time crisis for tens of thousands of veterans by granting access to private-sector care appears to run hard aground.

"I am very concerned that this conference committee will end up taking us back to where we were in separate veterans' health reform bills, need some major breakthroughs, according to lawmakers and staff.

"I am very concerned that this conference committee will end up taking us back to where we were in separate veterans' health care in this country," said Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mt. "That cannot happen. Veterans deserve better."

Worries center on the showpiece of both bills: that VA for two years will make private-sector care available to veterans if they face waits for VA care longer than 30 days or live more than 40 miles from VA care facilities.

The trouble goes beyond costs, though they are considerable. Lawmakers negotiating a final deal appear only now to be learning the challenges for veterans to access civilian care, and the need for VA to have the resources to monitor and coordinate expansion of purchased care.

The unease among lawmakers surfaced during a Wednesday hearing of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in which Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson presented the VA's longer-term plan to improve access to care.

Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., asked about difficulties VA has in getting medical records returned from civilian providers and monitoring the quality of care veterans receive in the private sector.

"One of the biggest challenges we have with purchased care in the community is maintaining continuity of care for the veteran," Gibson said. "The ability to get medical record information back and forth is a vital part of this, [to] ensure the quality of care. I will tell you, if the floodgates open, it will present the department with challenges."

The Congressional Budget Office dropped an anvil of hefty cost estimates on both bills, to the shock of fiscal conservatives among supporters.

The Senate voted to treat its bill as emergency legislation, which

MILITARY UPDATE

means not appropriating billions of dollars needed to pay for it; the costs simply would be added to the nation's debt. House Republicans want the final bill paid for, but need to find budget offsets that colleagues will accept.

With Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, insisting on emergency funding only, the search is on for ways to lower costs enough to entice House conferees to compromise.

One idea is to cut from two years to one the window for easy access to private-sector care for veterans facing long waits or long trips to get care. Another idea is to limit eligibility to current VA care enrollees, eliminating the threat of an enrollment rush and yet addressing the current care backlog.

After discussions with committee staffs, the CBO did lower its cost estimate for the Senate bill (HR 3230) to \$35 billion in direct spending over 10 years. But CBO cautioned that the new estimate ignores any costs from higher usage of VA care after October 2017, even if triggered by the bill's design. In an earlier cost estimate, CBO said VA health costs could spike by \$50 billion per year if as many as 2 million veterans are enticed to drop current health plans to seek VA-paid care from local physicians.

The VA's new plan to address the wait-time crisis includes expanding VA medical staff by 10,000 personnel, including 1,500 physicians, during the next three years. That sounds like a lot, Gibson said, but it's only a 3 percent increase to the Veterans Health Administration's current staff of 300,000.

The VA's audit of wait times at health facilities, he said, found that the "number one cause for scheduling difficulties" was a shortage of doctors.

"We have not historically managed to requirements," Gibson said. "We have managed to a budget number" regardless of actual need. "And the veterans would up being the shock absorbers in that process."

rier in the South China Sea.

The legislation is among a slate of measures in Congress aimed at healing lingering wounds from the Vietnam War era.

In this case, family members of sailors who died aboard the Evans on June 3, 1969, call it painful to visit the black granite wall and not see the names of their loved ones on it.

The names of the "Lost 74" have never been etched into one of Washington's most visited memorials because their ship was outside the official war zone.

From wire reports

The VA also wants more facility space to provide direct care, so it is asking Congress to fund eight large medical facilities from the VA's construction backlog list, to support leases for 77 more outpatient clinics, and to cover minor construction and maintenance projects that would open even more space.

Those projects combined would allow 8 million more VA health appointments annually, Gibson said. The entire plan would cost \$17.6 billion over three years. Gibson hinted it's a better plan than some lawmakers seek.

"I believe the greatest risk to veterans over the intermediate-to-long-term is that additional resources are provided only to support increased purchase care in the community and not to

materially remedy the historic shortfall in internal VA capacity," Gibson said. "Such an outcome would leave VA even more poorly positioned to meet future demand."

More VA facilities and staff, however, are precisely what tea party-aligned conservatives in Congress vehemently oppose. Their view is said to be influencing debate among House-Senate conferees.

Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., a tea party favorite who will retire from the Senate in December, told Gibson that what the VA needs is competition from private-sector health care providers and not more billions of dollars to spend.

"If somebody were biting at your backside because they were providing better care, faster care,

honest waiting lists, [VA leaders] would go, 'Holy smoke! If we don't get our act together [and] if we don't see more patients during the day, we're going to lose out,'" Johanns said.

Gibson countered that many veterans like and depend on VA care.

"But at the end of the day," Johanns interrupted, "these veterans fight for our freedoms. Why don't they have the freedom to make their own choice about their health care? And maybe they say ..."

"That hospital 20 minutes down the road is simply a better situation for me than the [VA] hospital that's 250 miles from where I'm at, with a long waiting list."

Send comments to Military Update, P.O. Box 231111, Centerville, VA, 20120, email milupdate@aol.com or twitter: Tom Philpott @Military_Update.

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MILITARY

Ex-SEAL testifies on Ventura punch

The Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A former U.S. Navy SEAL testified Wednesday that he saw military sniper Chris Kyle punch former Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura in a bar in 2006, providing the most complete account yet backing the version told by Kyle in his best-selling autobiography.

Jeremiah Dinnell testified in federal court as part of Ventura's defamation lawsuit against the estate of the former SEAL and "American Sniper" author, who was killed in Texas last year.

Dinnell, who served in the SEALs for a decade before leaving last year, said he saw Kyle strike Ventura with his right hand at a California bar after Ventura said the SEALs "deserve to lose a few." Dinnell said he watched Ventura fall and get up again.

In his 2012 book, Kyle wrote that he punched a man he called "Scruff Face." Kyle later identified the man as Ventura, who is also a former SEAL.

Ventura says he never said SEALs deserved to die and alleges Kyle never hit him.

Dinnell testified that he served in Iraq twice with Kyle and also served one tour in Afghanistan. He said he was friends with Kyle and his widow, Taya Kyle, and had read about half of "American Sniper" but not the three-

page section describing the bar incident.

Dinnell said he had been a pallbearer earlier that day at the funeral for a SEAL killed in battle and had gone to the wake at a bar in Coronado, Calif., where Ventura was attending a gathering of Navy underwater demolition team members.

Dinnell said he heard Ventura talking to others on the bar patio and he was "loud and boisterous." He said he heard Ventura "bashing (President) Bush" and saying that, "We didn't need to be overseas and what we were doing wasn't right."

Ventura's attorney, David Bradley Olsen, challenged Dinnell's credibility, pointing out discrepancies in earlier written statements and in a 2012 deposition, the Star Tribune reported. Olsen noted that in 2012, Dinnell never said that Ventura stated that SEALs deserved to die.

Leita Walker, an attorney for Kyle's widow, had a page of Dinnell's 151-page deposition displayed on the courtroom screen. The page showed Dinnell's statement that he heard Ventura say, "with what we are doing overseas, we deserve to lose a few guys."

Walker asked Dinnell if he had any doubts that Ventura made that statement.

"No," Dinnell replied. "It is something that sticks with you."

Bergdahl attorney asks public withhold judgment

LOLITA C. BALDOR

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The lawyer representing Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl said Wednesday that his client has been vilified by some people, but the public should not leap to conclusions before the U.S. Army finishes its investigation into how and why the soldier left his post in Afghanistan before being captured by the Taliban.

Eugene R. Fidell, a well-known lawyer and military justice expert, told Associated Press Television News that he assumes the probe will be done in several weeks.

"There are people who have vilified Sgt. Bergdahl, there are people who attempted to turn him into a kind of pinatã," said Fidell, who teaches at Yale Law School. "On the other hand, there are people of goodwill who have communicated with me their sympathy for the experience Sgt. Bergdahl has had to undergo, the ordeal, really."

Some former members of the unit Bergdahl served with in Afghanistan have called him a deserter, asserting that he chose to walk away and saying some servicemembers were wounded or killed looking for him.

An initial U.S. military investigation in 2009 concluded that

Bergdahl deliberately walked away from his unit, based on evidence available at the time.

The Army has not ruled out disciplinary action against Bergdahl, who was promoted during captivity, from private first class to sergeant, as a matter of standard procedure.

"Let the facts unfold a little bit," Fidell said, adding that he has met with Bergdahl as well as the Army officer handling the case, Maj. Gen. Kenneth R. Dahl.

He said Dahl is proceeding in a "methodical and professional way." The Pentagon says Bergdahl has not yet met with Dahl.

Bergdahl has completed his initial reintegration into the Army after his release by the Taliban on May 31, when he was turned over to Army special forces in exchange for five detainees at the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, detention center. He is now assigned a desk job at San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston in Texas.

Fidell added that Bergdahl is looking forward to having this entire matter behind him, and that the soldier has a lot of faith in the common sense of the American people.

He said Bergdahl also is deeply grateful that President Barack Obama saved his life.



CARLOS BONGIOANNI/Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., testifies during a U.S. Senate hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington on Thursday.

Dunford urges funding for Russian-made helos

By JOHN VANDIVER

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford urged lawmakers on Thursday to back off plans to cut funding for Russian-made transport helicopters used by the Afghan military, arguing that such a move would have a "catastrophic" effect on Afghanistan's ability to conduct counterterrorism operations.

"The reason I use the word catastrophic, which I don't think is hyperbole, is because the inability of the Afghans to have the operational reach represented by the Mi-17 will seriously deteriorate their ability to take the fight to the enemy," Dunford said during testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee. "But the more important reason I use the word catastrophic is their inability to take the fight to the enemy will actually put young Americans in harm's way in 2015 and beyond."

Dunford, who commands the war in Afghanistan, has been nominated to serve as the 36th commandant of the Marine Corps, replacing the retiring Gen. James Amos. Although Dunford was in Washington to testify at

his confirmation hearing, most questions from lawmakers centered on the 13-year war in Afghanistan, which the general has led since February 2013.

As the U.S. military drawdown, Afghan forces will increasingly need the operational reach provided by the Mi-17 helicopter. Plans call for the Afghans to maintain a fleet of about 80 of the aircraft, 30 of which are to be used by Afghan special forces, Dunford said.

While the Pentagon has a \$550 million contract with Rosobornexport, a Russian supplier of the Mi-17s used by Afghan forces, Russian actions in Ukraine have prompted lawmakers in the House and Senate to consider scaling back that contract as a punitive measure. But without proper funding, the Afghans' ability to maintain their fleet would be compromised, Dunford said, and "Afghan forces will not be successful in providing security in Afghanistan."

The Mi-17 has proven very popular with the Afghan air force because of its rugged design, ease of maintenance and low operating costs.

By the end of the year, the U.S. will formally end its combat mission in Afghanistan, and U.S.

troop levels are set to drop from roughly 30,000 today to 9,800. Most of those forces will be involved in assorted training and advisory missions.

About 1,000 of the forces will be focused on conducting counterterrorism operations. NATO allies are also expected to contribute an additional 4,000 troops in Afghanistan after 2014, Dunford said.

The general said he believes the Afghan security forces have proved to be effective fighters, though challenges remain, especially in areas such as logistics.

On the political side, Dunford also said he was optimistic that disputes over the outcome of the recent Afghan presidential election would soon be resolved and that a bilateral security pact would be reached with the U.S.

If confirmed as the head of the Marine Corps, Dunford will face new challenges, especially in balancing demands for more modernization while maintaining readiness and the Marine crisis-response capabilities.

"Balancing all those in a fiscally constrained environment is going to be very difficult," Dunford said.

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NATION

Microsoft to cut staff by 14 percent

The Associated Press

REDMOND, Wash. — Microsoft is cutting up to 18,000 jobs, about 14 percent of its staff, over the next year as it works to cut down on management layers and integrate the Nokia devices business it bought in April.

The news sent Microsoft's stock up 3 percent in premarket trading.

Although the job cuts had been expected, the extent of them was a surprise. It's the boldest move by CEO Satya Nadella since he took the reins from Steve Ballmer in February.

In a public email to employees Thursday, he said the changes were needed for the company to "become more agile and move faster."

Of the job cuts, about 12,500 professional and factory jobs will be cut. Microsoft expects charges of \$1.1 billion to \$1.6 billion over the next four quarters, which includes \$750 million to \$800 million for severance and related benefit costs.

FBR Capital Markets analyst Daniel Ives said the cuts were

about double what Wall Street was expecting.

But he said they were necessary to streamline operations and clean up a bloated management structure.

Microsoft has been shifting its focus from traditional PC software to cloud computing and cloud-based products like its Office 365 productivity software.

With its \$7.3 billion acquisition of Nokia's handset business, Microsoft has been seeking to meld its software and hardware business into a cohesive package, similar to rival Apple.

In a letter to employees, Executive Vice President Stephen Elop said the company will drive sales of its Windows Phone by targeting the lower-price smartphone market with its Lumia devices.

It also plans to develop more products for the higher-end smartphone segment.

Nadella said Thursday that he would give more details when Redmond, Wash.-based Microsoft reports fiscal 2014 results on Tuesday.



A police officer investigates the scene after a vehicle stolen by suspected bank robbers was stopped on Wednesday in Stockton, Calif.

CRAIG SANDERS, THE (STOCKTON, CALIF.) RECORD/AP

3 dead in hail of gunfire after robbery, chase

The Associated Press

STOCKTON, Calif. — Robbers fleeing a California bank took three women hostage and threw two of them from their getaway vehicle as they fired repeatedly at police during a high-speed chase. Police shot out their tires but the shooting continued, fatally wounding two suspects and the last hostage.

The violence in this central California city erupted Wednesday afternoon when officers responded to a report of a robbery at a Bank of the West branch and spotted three men taking three female hostages from the bank at gunpoint, Stockton police officer Joe Silva said.

The suspects with their hostages in tow fled in an SUV stolen from a bank worker and led officers on 45-minute chase.

During the pursuit, police said two of the hostages, both bank employees, were thrown from the SUV. One was taken to a hospital with a gunshot wound; the other suffered a grazing bullet wound.

The pursuit continued as the suspects fired with

AK-47 style rifles from the SUV. Fourteen police cars and many homes along the robbers' path were peppered with bullets, Police Chief Eric Jones told a news conference late Wednesday.

"It was such a chaotic ... fluid situation, really one of the most dangerous, tense situations that a police officer could go through," Jones said.

When the SUV's tires were shot and the vehicle came to a stop at an intersection, officers exchanged gunfire with at least one of the assailants.

"The firing never stopped," Jones said, noting that the suspects had ammunition strapped to their bodies. "They were trying to kill (the officers), no doubt."

When it was all over, the third hostage was found dead in the SUV and one of the robbers was also dead. The police chief said the hostage was a bank customer, and that she appears to have been used by the suspects as a human shield during the shootout.

Police said the other two suspects were taken to the hospital with gunshot wounds, and one of them later died.

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NATION



RIK LOOMIS, LOS ANGELES TIMES/AP

Immigrants kept crossing the border illegally are housed Tuesday inside the McAllen Border Patrol Station in McAllen, Texas.

White House faces broad resistance on border bill

By ERICA WERNER
AND JIM KUHNEN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The White House is meeting growing resistance from both the left and the right as it pushes a multibillion-dollar emergency spending bill to tackle the crisis of tens of thousands of unaccompanied children crossing into South Texas.

The crisis of unaccompanied youths at the border has burst into U.S. headlines in recent weeks, with the bulk of more than 57,000 young people streaming up from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador since last autumn, often fleeing brutal gang violence.

In Washington, Democratic opposition is hardening to changing a 2008 anti-trafficking law to allow Central American children to be sent home more quickly.

Meanwhile, Republicans demand such changes as their price for supporting any part of President Barack Obama's \$3.7 billion spending request.

An Obama administration Senate briefing late Wednesday ap-

peared to change few minds.

"You wanted someone to stand up and say, 'Hey let's talk about reality here. There's nowhere to get this money out of the House of Representatives unless you adjust the law,'" said Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Ill.

In the briefing, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson reiterated support for changing the 2008 law to treat Central American children the same as Mexican youths, who can be turned around at the border without the immigration hearing guaranteed to those from Central America.

Yet Johnson's statement didn't go far enough for Republicans, even as Democrats expressed alarm at such a change. "I'm really opposed to changing that 2008 law," Tom Harkin, a Democratic senator, said as he left the meeting.

Any bill approved by the Republican-led House might have trouble in the Democratic-controlled Senate, even as time draws short for any action in the few weeks remaining before Con-

gress' annual summer recess.

Meanwhile, the politics around the issue appeared set to get even tougher as a spokeswoman for Texas Republican Sen. Ted Cruz announced he would use any legislation to try to repeal a 2-year-old Obama directive that allowed certain immigrants brought here illegally as youths to stay and work in the U.S.

Republicans contend that policy is partly responsible for the current crisis by creating the perception that youths can stay in this country, even though no one arriving now would be eligible. The administration largely disputes that notion.

Still, lawmakers of both parties expressed the desire to act amid signs that the public was demanding a solution.

One in six people now calls immigration the most pressing problem facing the U.S., according to a new Gallup poll — up dramatically since last month, when only 5 percent said immigration topped their list of concerns.

Democrats target women with bills on contraception, pay

By CHARLES BABINGTON
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic and Republican lawmakers are fervently pursuing a batch of doomed bills in the U.S. Congress in a bid to woo women, whose votes could be decisive in the Nov. 4 midterm elections.

Recent votes on "pay equity" and family-leave issues were aimed at women, who are increasingly crucial to Democrats' election hopes, and therefore worrisome to Republicans. Any shift in women's typical turnout or Democratic tilt this fall could determine tight elections, especially for the Senate.

Republicans need to gain six Senate seats to control the chamber, and women's issues are especially lively in the most contested states, including Colorado, North Carolina, Arkansas and Louisiana.

A Senate vote Wednesday on contraception legislation is the latest example of Democrats' win-by-losing strategy, which forces Republicans to vote on sensitive matters that might anger women.

Recent elections explain the fixation on female voters.

Women have outvoted men in every federal election since 1982. Female voters preferred Democrats by 11 percentage points in 2012, while men favored Republicans by 8 percentage points. But the voting rate among women, and especially single women, usually drops more than male voting in nonpresidential elections.

Both parties must cater to their

ideological bases, even as they court women voters.

Nearly all Republicans are opposing measures that appear likely to expand abortion access, place new requirements on employers or limit religious conservatives' rights.

Democrats overwhelmingly support abortion access, worker benefits and equal treatment of women in the workplace.

Still, Democrats approached this week's birth control debate with different tactics, depending on whether they were seeking reelection in a Republican-leaning state or in a 50-50 or Democratic-leaning state.

Democrats knew Republicans would block their bill to counter the Supreme Court's recent ruling that said employers may exclude birth control products from their health insurance plans if the products violate the employers' religious faith.

Two Democrats who strongly campaigned against the court ruling centered on arts-and-crafts company Hobby Lobby are seeking re-election in states that President Barack Obama carried at least once, thanks in part to strong backing from women: Kay Hagan, of North Carolina, and Mark Udall, of Colorado.

Minutes after all but three of the Senate's 45 Republicans voted to block the Democrats' "Not My Boss' Business" bill, Udall said his party will continue to contest a ruling that says "a boss' beliefs can supersede a woman's rights to health care benefits that she has earned."

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STARS AND STRIPES

Justice looks into IRS email incident

By JOSH HICKS
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department is investigating missing emails of former Internal Revenue Service official Lois Lerner, according to testimony that Deputy Attorney General James Cole prepared for a hearing Thursday.

The House subcommittee on economic growth, job creation and regulatory affairs, headed by Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, has

called on Cole to testify about the matter. Cole said in his prepared remarks that the Justice Department is "investigating the circumstances of the lost emails from Ms. Lerner's computer." The Wall Street Journal first reported his planned remarks.

Lerner is a central figure in the agency's targeting controversy. The IRS has said it lost many of her emails when her computer crashed in June 2011. The agency said it subsequently destroyed

her hard drive as a matter of protocol after trying to recover the data with help from technical experts, including IRS forensic specialists.

"Finally, someone in the administration admits that the destruction of two years of emails from Lois Lerner is fishy," Jordan said in a statement Wednesday.

He added that there are still "significant bipartisan concerns with the administration's overall investigation."

WORLD

Truce remains elusive in Gaza

Attacks resume after chaotic lull in fighting

By KARIN LAUB
AND TIA GOLDENBERG
The Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Gaza residents rushed to banks, vegetable markets and shops Thursday during a first U.N.-brokered lull in 10 days of Israel-Hamas fighting, but a quick resumption of hostilities after it ended signaled that a permanent truce remains elusive.

Hamas fired 10 rockets at Israel after the end of the temporary truce, while Israel launched two airstrikes at the Gaza Strip, security officials said.

Egypt persisted with diplomatic efforts to bring all sides to the table Thursday, with President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi meeting with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas after Egyptian officials met separately with representatives of Israel and Hamas in Cairo. But the gaps remain wide.

Israel accepted Egypt's call earlier this week to halt all fighting, but Hamas rejected the idea because it first wants to lock in achievements, such as easing the seven-year blockade of Gaza by Israel and Egypt.

Strict Egyptian access restrictions to Gaza over the past year, combined with long-running Israeli closures, severely weakened the Islamic militant group.

During the humanitarian cease-fire, Gaza residents rushed to restock supplies after more than a week of being mostly holed up at home for fear of airstrikes.

"The situation is likely to get worse because there is no clear way out of it," said Moussa Amran, 43, a money changer in central Gaza City.

The city's streets returned to normalcy during the lull, with traffic jams, motorists honking horns and Hamas police directing traffic at busy intersections. Hundreds lined up outside banks, with people jostling and shouting to get to ATM machines. In an outdoor market, shoppers filled plastic bags with fruit, vegetables and freshly slaughtered chickens. Abdullah Jaber, 42, seized the opportunity to visit his father, Hosni, 87, in a care facility for the elderly and disabled close to the Israeli border in an area that has been targeted repeatedly by the Israeli army as a launching area for rockets.

Several tank shells hit the upper floors of the five-story Wafa rehabilitation center last week, punching large holes into the wall facing the border. Israel has demanded that the building be evacuated, but director Basman Ashi said such a trip was too risky for his 17 patients, many of them unable to walk.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 230 Palestinians, Gaza's health ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Kidra said. One Israeli has been killed and several wounded in rocket attacks, officials said. Since July 8, Israel carried out nearly 2,000 airstrikes, while Hamas fired more than 1,300 rockets.

In Cairo, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, after a Gaza-mediated meeting, told the Associated Press that the cease-fire deal was still alive and expressed frustration that "Palestinian factions" — a clear reference to Hamas — had not agreed to it.

Hamas' agreement is crucial to any such truce, but its demand that the blockade be eased significantly is likely to be rejected by Israel and Egypt because it would strengthen the group's hold on Gaza, where it seized power in 2007.

On Wednesday, the No. 2 in Hamas, Moussa Abu Marzouk, presented a list of demands to Egypt, said a senior official in the group who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the negotiations with reporters.



ADEL HANA/AP

Palestinian girls on Thursday collect their belongings at an apartment building which was hit by an overnight Israeli missile strike in Gaza City.

Israelis struggle for normalcy amid threat of incoming fire

By ARON HELLER
The Associated Press

HOD HASHARON, Israel — A morning siren in this middle-class Israeli town sent some fleeing inside for shelter — but others ran outside, curious to catch a glimpse of the incoming rocket being shot down.

Thanks to Israel's "Iron Dome" defense system, Israelis seem to fear less for their lives than for their lifestyles as they adjust to the anxiety of random, potentially deadly, yet generally harmless rocket attacks.

Whereas the residents in northern and southern Israel have years of experience in coping with militant rocket fire, the people in central Israel are new to the reality and still getting used to hearing sounds of explosions.

"It just doesn't make any sense that this is happening," said Taly Shlomo, 18, who exited a Hod Hasharon bakery to watch the fireworks above. "It's not scary because nothing terrible has happened yet but it's something you can't get used to. It's crazy."

In Gaza, Israeli strikes have left a trail of devastation, with more than 200 people dead in just over a week of fighting — a quarter of them children, according to the United Nations. Southern Israel has experience with the dangers too, battered for years by militant fire from Gaza that has caused deaths and frequently sends residents rushing for safety. But in central Israel, residents have long cultivated a sense of distance from the region's conflicts — and their main concern now appears to be that it not be shattered.

Residents are struggling to decide whether to carry on with their routines or take emergency precautions, whether to keep up with the

nonstop TV coverage of the fighting or tune out entirely for their own sanity. Parents are debating whether to rush their children to shelters at the sound of each siren or take their chances but not convey panic.

"We live in a weird and distorted reality," said Maya Elharar, 36, a mother of three. "The anxiety is there all the time. It's very sad that people have to endure this."

A striking photo of some 20 young children lying on the floor of their Hod Hasharon kindergarten during a siren with their hands covering their heads was featured prominently Wednesday in Israeli media. The images from Gaza have been far more harrowing, with funerals of children and scenes of others huddling with their families in refugees after their homes have been destroyed.

Israel suffered its first fatality of the fighting Tuesday, when a civilian delivering food to soldiers near the Gaza border was killed by shrapnel from a mortar. At his funeral Wednesday, a eulogizer prayed he would be the last victim of this offensive.

Most Israelis say they are willing to stomach the abnormal reality a while longer to avoid repeating a similar situation again, having already faced three rounds of fierce rocket fire over the past five years.

"The rockets have to stop once and for all," said Said Shabi, 64.

Yotam Dagan, the director of community outreach at Israel's Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War, said research showed that some 20 percent of those exposed to large explosions would develop some form of post-traumatic stress disorder, Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Bolivia acts to lower working age for kids

EL ALTO, Bolivia — While most of the world is trying to banish child labor, Bolivia is on the verge of becoming the first nation to legalize it from age 10. Congress has approved the proposal and all that's now required is President Evo Morales' signature.

The bill's sponsors say lowering the minimum work age from 14 simply acknowledges a reality: Many poor families in Bolivia have no other choice than for their kids to work. The bill offers working children safeguards, they say.

Under the legislation, 10-year-olds will be able to work as long as they are under parental supervision and also attend school. It sets 12 as the minimum age for a child to work under contract.

Militants fought near Pakistani leader's home

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani police fought for more than 10 hours with militants they said were planning to attack the home of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, officials said Thursday.

An intelligence officer and two militants were killed when the shootout erupted during an overnight operation in the eastern city of Lahore, said police chief Zulfikar Hameed. Shuja Khanzada, a provincial counterterrorism official, said the gunbattle took place at a house near Sharif's residence, which he said was the "prime target" of the militants.

Sharif was away from the residence at the time.

2 bomb attacks in Iraq kill at least 11 people

BAGHDAD — Two bomb attacks, one of which ripped through a sprawling Baghdad market, killed at least 11 people in Iraq on Thursday, officials said.

Thursday's first attack struck Baghdad's Shorja Market, an open air emporium that is one of the most popular places for residents. A police officer said a bomb hidden on a wooden cart exploded near a Shiite mosque in the market, killing at least four people and wounding 12, a police officer said.

In Tajil, 12 miles north of the capital, a suicide bomber rammed his car into a military checkpoint, killing four soldiers and three civilians, a police officer said. Thirteen people were wounded.

Firefighting helicopter crashes in South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea — A firefighting helicopter crashed Thursday near an apartment complex where 11 people suffered minor injuries after a ferry sinking that killed more than 290 in April, fire officials in Gwangju said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The helicopter was returning to headquarters in the eastern provincial firefighting agency after participating in search operations for 11 people who survived after a ferry sinking that killed more than 290 in April, fire officials in Gwangju said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The crash killed all five fire officers aboard the helicopter, while a female helicopter pilot on the ground received a minor injury, the officials said.

From The Associated Press

UKRAINE UNREST

Putin: Sanctions hurt ties, US companies

By NATALIYA VASILYEVA
The Associated Press

MOSCOW — President Vladimir Putin on Thursday lamented the latest round of U.S. sanctions against Russia, saying they will stalemate bilateral relations and hurt not only Russian but also American businesses.

Russia's benchmark MICEX was down 2.9 percent in late afternoon trading Thursday upon news of the sanctions while Russia's biggest oil company, Rosneft, was nearly 5 percent down and second-largest oil producer was trading 9 percent lower.

Putin's comments came hours after President Barack Obama announced broader sanctions against Russia, targeting two major energy firms including Rosneft, a pair of powerful financial institutions, eight weapons firms and four individuals. The increased U.S. economic pressure is designed to end the insurgency in eastern Ukraine that is widely believed to be backed by the Kremlin.

The U.S. penalties, however,

stopped short of the most stringent actions the West has threatened, which would fully cut off key sectors of Russia's oil-dependent economy. But officials said those steps were still on the table if Russia fails to abide by the West's demands to stop its support for the pro-Russian insurgents who have destabilized eastern Ukraine.

The insurgents have been fighting government troops in eastern Ukraine for four months now in a conflict that the U.N. says has killed over 400 people and has displaced tens of thousands. The conflict took off shortly after Russia annexed the mostly Russian-speaking Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea.

In televised comments Thursday, Putin said the sanctions are "driving into a corner" relations between the two nations as well as the interests of American companies and "the long-term national interests of the U.S. government and people."

Putin warned Washington that the sanctions will backlash against American companies

working in Russia.

The most noticeable companies on the list are Rosneft and Russia's largest independent gas producer, Novatek. Both are now barred from getting long-term loans from U.S. entities.

Moscow-based investment bank Sberbank-CIB said in a note to investors that Russian companies cannot replace long-term loans from the U.S. immediately.

"While Asian and Middle Eastern money can step in to fill the gap, we expect that this will take time," the note said, adding that borrowing will also cost more.

Rosneft has a multibillion-dollar deal with ExxonMobil, which among other things allowed Exxon to develop oil fields in Russia.

"We gave this American company the right to work on the shelf," Putin said in Brazil, referring to Exxon's potential exploration on the Russian Arctic shelf. "So, what, the United States does not want it to work there now?"

Russia's foreign ministry dismissed the sanctions "bullying"

and signaled that it was ready to push back.

"We consider the new round of American sanctions against Russia as a primitive attempt to take vengeance for the fact that events in Ukraine are not playing out to the tune of the script of Washington," the ministry said in a statement.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev in televised remarks said the sanctions are throwing Russia's relations with the West "back to the 1980s" and added that Russia "will have to pay more attention to military and security spending."

Putin made no mention of the additional sanctions levied Wednesday by the 28-nation European Union, which urged the European Investment Bank to sign no new financing agreements with Moscow and was suspending operations in Russia financed by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. European nations have much closer energy and other economic ties with Russia and have not imposed as tough sanc-

tions as the United States.

But the foreign ministry did lash out at the EU's new sanctions, accusing Europe of "giving in to the bullying of the U.S. administration."

In Moscow, the Association of European Businesses on Thursday expressed its "strong disagreement" with the new U.S. sanctions, saying "these companies and banks are reliable and long-term partners of many European companies" and said the curtailing of the activities of the EBRD and the EIB in Russia might "affect the general reliability of these two institutions in other markets."

Igor Sechin, Rosneft's CEO and a close confidante of Putin, dismissed the U.S. sanctions as "unfounded, subjective and unlawful," adding that his company "had no role in the events in Ukraine."

Sechin said their lawyers have to yet to explore how hurtful the sanctions could be but added that the company has enough money in reserves to refrain from taking out new loans for a while.

Pentagon: More Russia troops going to border

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Russian combat troops are again building up along the border with Ukraine, and U.S. officials believe Moscow may be sending heavy weapons into the country to aid the separatists, the Pentagon said Wednesday.

Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters the U.S. believes there are now up to 12,000 Russian troops on the border, reflecting a steady increase in recent weeks.

On June 30, Air Force Gen. Philip Breedlove, the U.S. commander of NATO forces in Europe, said there were about seven battalion task groups and some small special operations forces along the border — which officials said amounted to about 8,000 troops. The growing number of troops, he said, is "not a helpful development" in what it brings to the problem.

The number has fluctuated widely. U.S. officials in May estimated that there were as many as 40,000 Russian troops arrayed along the border but as weeks went by, the total plunged to about 1,000 under pressure from the West.

Warren said there are a variety of Russian forces there, including the combat battalion task groups.

Ukraine and the West have accused Russia of fomenting the insurgency by sending troops and weapons, including tanks and rocket launchers, something Moscow denies.



DMITRY LOVETSKY/AP

People walk amid debris Thursday at the crash site of a passenger plane near the village of Grabovo, Ukraine. A Ukrainian official said a passenger plane carrying 295 people was shot down Thursday as it flew over the country. Malaysia Airlines tweeted that it lost contact with one of its flights as it was traveling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur over Ukrainian airspace.

Airliner: Plane goes down in region that has seen fighting

FROM FRONT PAGE

The Donetsk region government said a plane crashed Thursday near a village called Grabovo, which it said is currently under the control of the separatists. The region where the flight was lost has seen severe fighting between the two sides in recent days.

Anton Geraschenko, an adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said on his Facebook page the

plane was flying at an altitude of 33,000 feet. He said it was hit by a missile fired from a Buk launcher, which can fire missiles up to an altitude of 72,000 feet.

The Malaysia Airlines plane is a Boeing 777-200ER, which was delivered to Malaysia Airlines on July 30, 1997, according to FlightGlobal's Ascend Online Fleets, which sells and tracks information about aircraft. It has more

than 43,000 hours of flight time and 6,950 takeoffs and landings.

Poroshenko said his country's armed forces didn't shoot at any airborne targets.

"We do not exclude that this plane was shot down, and we stress that the Armed Forces of Ukraine did not take action against any airborne targets," he said. "We are sure that those who are guilty in this tragedy will be

held responsible."

Separatist leader Andrei Purgin told The Associated Press that he was certain that Ukrainian troops had shot the plane down but gave no explanation or proof for his statement.

Purgin said he did not know whether rebel forces owned Buk missile launchers, but said even if they did, there had no fighters capable of operating it.

NATION

We the People

... wish to renounce our US citizenship

BY ADAM GELLER
The Associated Press

Inside the long-awaited package, six pages of government paperwork dryly affirmed Carol Tapanila's anxious request. But when Tapanila slipped the contents from the brown envelope, she saw there was something more.

"We the people ..." declared the script inside her U.S. passport — now with four holes punched through it from cover to cover. Her departure from life as an American was stamped final on the same page: "Bearer Expatriated Self."

With the envelope's arrival, Tapanila, a native of upstate New York who has lived in Canada since 1969, joined a largely overlooked surge of Americans rejecting what is, to millions, a highly sought prize: U.S. citizenship. Last year, the U.S. government reported a record 2,999 people renounced citizenship or terminated permanent residency; most are widely assumed to be driven by a desire to avoid paying taxes on hidden wealth.

The reality, though, is more complicated. The government's pursuit of tax evaders among Americans living abroad is indeed driving the jump in abandoned citizenship, experts say. But renouncers — whose ranks have swelled more than fivefold from a decade ago — often contradict the stereotype of the financial scoundrel. Many are from very ordinary economic circumstances.

Some call themselves "accidental Americans," who recall little of life in the U.S., but long ago happened to be born in it. Others say they renounced because of politics, family or personal identity. Some say signing away citizenship was a huge relief. Others recall being sickened by the decision.

At the U.S. Consulate in Geneva, "I talked to a man who explained to me that I could never, ever get my nationality back," said Donna-Lane Nelson, whose Boston accent lingers though she's lived in Switzerland 24 years. "It felt like a divorce. It felt like a death. I took the second oath and I left the consulate and I threw up."

When Americans do hear about patriots rejecting citizenship, it's more often people keeping their U.S. citizenship and dropping that of another country.

Last year, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz acknowledged the Canadian citizenship he was born to, but has since renounced it.

One of the few times rejected U.S. citizenship has gotten significant ink was Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin's 2011 decision to turn in his American passport after moving to Singapore. Saverin likely avoided millions of dollars in taxes by doing so shortly before Facebook's initial stock offering.

Saverin's decision hit a political nerve, along with scandals surrounding UBS and Credit Suisse, which were caught matching wealthy Americans with offshore accounts.

But some of those surrendering citizenship say their reasons are as much about life as about taxes, particularly since the U.S. government does not tax Americans abroad on their first \$96,600 in yearly income.

Corine Mauch was born a U.S. citizen to Swiss parents who were college students in Iowa. They lived in the U.S. until she was 5, then again for two more years before she turned 11. Mauch maintained dual citizenship even after she was elected to Zurich's city council. When she became mayor, she reconsidered.

During the last American presidential election, "I asked myself, 'Where do I feel

championships.

When the team's owner suggested last year that he join Taiwan's national team, Davis said, he found little motivation to keep his U.S. citizenship.

"When you think about who I am as a black guy in the U.S., I didn't have opportunities," he said. "You get discriminated against over there in the South. Here everyone is so nice. They invite you into their homes, they're so hospitable. ... There's no crime, no guns. I can't help but love this place."

The jump in renunciations reflects evolving views about national identity, said Nancy L. Green, an American professor at the L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. When the U.S. got its start, citizenship was defined by "perpetual allegiance" — the British notion of nationality as a birthright that could never be changed.

Carol Tapanila's life in Canada has tested that redefinition.

Six years after Tapanila's husband lost his job at a Boeing factory in Washington state and they moved to Canada for work, the couple became citizens of their new country. She said U.S. consular officials told her that, by swearing allegiance to Canada, she might well have lost her American citizenship.

After retiring from a job as an administrative assistant at an oil company in Calgary,

Tapanila began putting \$125 a month into a special savings account for her developmentally disabled son, matched by the Canadian government. In her will, she authorized creation of a trust fund to draw on retirement savings and other assets to provide for her son, who is now 40, after her death.

Tapanila said she didn't know she was required to file U.S. tax returns until 2007, when her daughter raised the subject.

Her troubles were compounded by her decision to apply for a U.S. passport after a border officer told her she should have one.

She has since spent \$42,000 on fees for lawyers and accountants and paid about \$2,000 in U.S. taxes, including on funds in her son's disability savings account.

In 2012 she turned in the passport, renouncing U.S. citizenship to protect money saved for her retirement and her son.

Tapanila, 70, has tried and failed to renounce U.S. citizenship on his behalf, saying officials told her such a decision must be made by the individual alone.



'When you think about who I am as a black guy in the U.S., I didn't have opportunities.'

Quincy Davis III
Pure Youth Construction
basketball team, Taiwan



'I took the second oath and I left the consulate and I threw up.'

Donna-Lane Nelson
Swiss citizen who was
formerly a U.S. national



'I asked myself, "Where do I feel at home?" And the answer was clear: In Zurich and in Switzerland.'

Zurich Mayor Corine Mauch
born a U.S. citizen



at home?" And the answer is clear: In Zurich and in Switzerland," Mauch said. "My attachment to America is limited to my very early youth." Double taxation was "not the crucial factor for my decision," she said. "But I will not miss the U.S. tax bureaucracy either."

Sports played the central role in Quincy Davis III's decision. Davis, raised in Los Angeles and Mobile, Ala., played professional basketball in Europe after three years as Tulane University's leading scorer. By 2011, he was home studying to become a firefighter when he was offered a spot on a Taiwanese pro squad. He's since helped lead the Pure Youth Construction team to two

NATION



MEL NELSON, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

Visitors take in the view of the Grand Canyon at Mather Point on the Southern Rim in January.

Officials: Development plans a threat to view, water supply

By JULIE CART
Los Angeles Times

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. — At the rim of the Grand Canyon, busloads of Chinese tourists jostled on a recent day with 20-something backpackers and an Amish family with rambunctious boys in suspenders and straw hats, all eager for a prime viewing spot.

They gazed out on a dizzying sight of receding canyons and sheer rock walls, with the Colorado River cutting through the canyon floor a mile down.

Generations of park managers have tried to preserve that natural vista, but officials here say a proposed development would alter the view.

Looking eastward from the canyon's popular South Rim, visitors soon could see a hive of construction as workers build restaurants, hotels and shops on a distant mesa on the Navajo Indian reservation.

The developers also plan a gondola ride from these attractions to whisk tourists to the canyon floor, where they would stroll along an elevated riverside walkway to a restaurant at the confluence of the Colorado and Little Colorado rivers.

That project and a second, unrelated development proposed for just south of the canyon have set

off alarms at the National Park Service, which sees them as the most serious threat the park has faced in its 95-year history.

The first would alter the natural beauty of the canyon and would encroach on its borders. The second, a major housing and commercial development, jeopardizes the fragile ecology and water supply on the arid South Rim plateau. The Tusayan development would add 2,200 homes and 3 million square feet of commercial space to a town two blocks long.

Park officials say existing development around the park and the scarcity of water already have stressed the park's ability to handle visitors. The new projects would only make matters worse.

"They are serious threats to the future of the park," said park Superintendent Dave Oberuaga.

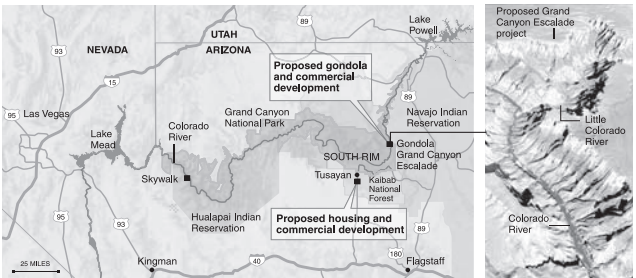
"When you have that size and scope of potential development that close to the park, it will impact our visitor experience."

The Grand Canyon affords once-in-a-lifetime views, but it has always been difficult for visitors except seasoned hikers to reach the canyon floor. Most of the 5 million annual visitors stop at the rim, look out and move on without ever venturing into the canyon.

Native American tribes are changing that. Grand Canyon West, on Hualapai land, operates

Grand plans

National Park Service officials consider developments proposed near Grand Canyon National Park a serious threat. They say the projects would alter the park's vistas and jeopardize its fragile ecology and water supply.



SOURCES: OpenStreetMap contributors, Google Earth

JULIE CART, LORENA INIGUEZ ELEZEE, LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT

the Skywalk attraction, a popular glass walkway that juts out over the canyon. Since 2007, the tribe has offered helicopter tours that land on tribal property next to the river.

The proposed Grand Canyon Escalade gondola would afford a rare opportunity for tourists to reach the canyon floor, said developer R. Lamar Whitmer, who is working with the Navajo.

The park service offers nothing more than "a drive-by wilderness experience," Whitmer said. "The average person can't ride a mule to the bottom of the canyon. We want them to feel the canyon from the bottom."

For now, the park is waiting for

the tribe to complete its planning process before providing an official response.

The project requires approval of the Navajo tribal government — and some within the tribe have voiced objections, particularly about the gondola's terminus near the confluence of the rivers.

Tribal opponents believe the two rivers represent male and female, and where they meet is where life begins.

"That's where our spirits go back to," said Renae Yellowhorse of the group Save the Confluence. "My father passed away last March. That's where he resides. If there is a development there, where are our prayers going to go?"

Two miles from the Grand Canyon's front entrance is a project that park officials say is a more fundamental threat because they expect it to diminish the small amount of water found naturally on the arid Colorado Plateau.

The park's main gateway community of Tusayan has approved plans for a development that would increase the town's demand for water fourfold.

The plans do not say where the water will come from.

With Arizona suffering through its worst drought in 110 years of records, the park service says there isn't enough water to sustain both wildlife and the new development.

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NATION



JORDAN STEAD, SEATTLEPI.COM/AP

A large cloud rises over wildfires in Eastern Washington — as seen from Seattle — at sunset Wednesday.

Homes threatened by Wash. wildfire

The Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Authorities in Central Washington State urged residents of nearly 900 homes to flee a wildfire fueled by strong winds that was tearing through timber in its path late Wednesday.

Firefighters could not contain the fire raging 10 miles north of the Bavarian-themed village of Leavenworth on Wednesday and hot and windy conditions were forecast for Thursday.

The fire's smoke plume was

visible for miles as it rose 25,000 feet into the air.

Residents of 860 homes were told they should leave immediately, fire spokesman Rick Acosta said late Wednesday. Authorities said another 800 homes were less seriously threatened.

Nearly 1,000 firefighters were battling three separate wildfires in the state.

Worsening wildfire activity prompted the governor's office in both Washington and Oregon to declare a state of emergency, a

move that enables state officials to call up the National Guard.

Wildfires were also burning in Oregon, Utah, Idaho and California.

In southern Oregon, a wildfire destroyed 17 homes and 16 outbuildings earlier this week, while a fire in Northern California was still posing a threat to nearly 70 homes, fire officials said Wednesday night.

The California blaze was started on Friday by marijuana growing activity, authorities said.

@HiddenCash to pay for money hunt damage

WHITTIER, Calif. — When the man with the Twitter handle @HiddenCash moved his scavenger hunt to Whittier, 1,000 people trampled through a park seeking free money. Now Jason Buzi, the real estate investor behind the cash giveaways, says he will pay for the damage.

KNBC-TV reported Tuesday that Buzi has agreed to send the city \$5,000 to cover the cost of repairs. City Manager Jeff Collier said cash hunters trampled on plants, uprooted a newly planted tree, tore apart sprinkler heads and broke fences. Collier said Buzi was apologetic.

Through Twitter, Buzi has directed people to envelopes with \$50 and \$100 inside them in California in recent months. He calls his giveaways a "social experiment for good."

From The Associated Press

'Keurig machine for beer' gets crowdfunding help

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

At the end of a 30-minute interview with Synek co-founder Steve Young this month, a colleague of the beer entrepreneur checked his smartphone, leaned over and told him, "We just made another \$5,000."

By then, Young was checking his phone many, many times a day. Since the 28-year-old launched a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter on June 24 for what has been dubbed the "Keurig machine for beer," the St. Louis resident said he's getting 1,000 emails, phone calls and voice mails a day from people inquiring about the product, eight months before it's available for sale.

Per Kickstarter rules, Synek had a month to reach his goal of

\$250,000 or it wouldn't get the funding. As of July 10, Synek had raised more than \$450,000. The money will be used for development, manufacturing and marketing expenses.

In return, those who made pledges get first-edition versions of the product when it hits the market next March, T-shirts and other perks, based on their level of investment.

Synek, which has been in development for two years, has a patent pending for its titanium and nylon bags that can be filled from brewers' taps with a gallon of beer, or the equivalent of 11 beers. The bags are pressurized, allowing the beer to maintain freshness for at least 30 days, much longer than a growler's shelf life of a mere few days, according to Young.

Let family access dead loved one's online accounts?

By ANNE FLAHERTY
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Should your emails, web albums and other online accounts die when you do? Or should you be able to pass them down to a family member much as you would a house or a box of letters?

A leading group of lawyers says that families should immediately get access to everything online unless otherwise specified in a will. They are urging state lawmakers to enact their proposal so loved ones don't get shut out as American lives move increasingly online.

"Our email accounts are our filing cabinets these days," said Suzanne Brown Walsh, a Cummings & Lockwood attorney who led the effort. But "if you need access to an email account, in most states, you can't get it until you die."

The Uniform Law Commission, whose members are appointed by state governments to help standardize state laws, on Wednesday endorsed the plan for "digital assets." It would give loved ones access to data — but not control — of the deceased's digital accounts unless a will says otherwise.

To become law, the legislation would have to be adopted by each state's legislature. It would trump "terms of service" agreements by tech companies that prohibit people from accessing an account that isn't theirs.

"This is something most people don't think of until they are faced with it. They have no idea what is about to be lost," said Karen Williams of Beaverton, Ore., who said Facebook for access to her 22-year-old son Loren's account appeared to be retracted.

He died in a 2005 motorcycle accident.

Facebook and other tech companies have been reluctant to hand over their customers' private data. But when confronted with death, families say they need access to settle financial details or simply for sentimental reasons.

Privacy activists are skeptical of the proposal. Ginger McCall, associate director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington, said a judge's approval should be needed for

access, to protect the privacy of both the owners of accounts and the people who communicate with them.

"The digital world is a different world" from offline, McCall said. "No one would keep 10 years of every communication they ever had with dozens or even hundreds of other people under their bed."

Many people assume they can decide what happens by sharing certain passwords with a trusted family member, or even making those passwords part of their will. But in addition to potentially exposing passwords when a will becomes public record, anti-hacking laws and the terms of service agreements prohibit that.

Several tech providers have come up with their own solutions. Facebook, for example, will "memorialize" accounts by allowing already confirmed friends to continue to view photos and old posts. Google, when it runs Gmail, YouTube and Picasa Web Albums, offers this: If people don't log on after a while, their accounts can be deleted or shared with a designated person. Yahoo users agree when signing up that their accounts expire when they die.

But the courts aren't convinced that a company supplying the technology should get to decide what happens to a person's digital assets. In 2005, a Michigan probate judge ordered Yahoo to hand over the emails of a Marine killed in Iraq after his parents argued that their son would have wanted to share them. Likewise, a court eventually granted Williams, the Oregon mother, access to her son's Facebook account, although she says the communications appeared to be retracted.

Williams said she supports letting people decide in their will whether accounts should be kept from family members.

"I could understand where some people don't want to share everything," she said in a phone interview this week. "But to us, losing him (our son) unexpectedly, anything he touched became so valuable to us." And "if we were still in the era of keeping a shoebox full of letters, that would have been part of the estate and we wouldn't have thought anything of it."

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Ku Klux Klan using candy as recruiting tool

SC SENECA — Some residents in northwestern South Carolina said they found bags of candy on their street containing a piece of paper asking them to join the Ku Klux Klan.

Residents in an Oconee County subdivision found the bags Saturday night or Sunday morning.

The paper said "Save Our Land, Join the Klan." It had a phone number that led to an automated message discussing KKK efforts against illegal immigration.

Robert Jones told WHNS-TV that he's the imperial klalfif of the Loyal White Knights and said the effort was part of a recruiting event held three times a year.

Cronut creator demands name change

LA SHREVEPORT — A northwest Louisiana restaurant's croissant-doughnut hybrid is getting a new name — Juggernaut, Highlander or Steve.

Lizz Bowen and her husband, Scott Roebuck, got a cease-and-desist letter last week from Cronut creator Dominique Ansel, telling them that their Sevendipity Cafe in Shreveport's Highland neighborhood cannot use any variation of his trademarked name.

Using a string of letters often pronounced "oh" in Louisiana names, Bowen and Roebuck had been calling the pastries creauxnuts. Bowen uses the restaurant's bread dough for her flaky pastry rings with toppings that change from day to day.

The couple held a name-the-pastry contest on the cafe's Facebook page. Bowen announced the three finalists Sunday night.

Candidate scraps shotgun-blast ad

WA RICHLAND — A Democrat running for Congress in conservative central Washington on Saturday removed an online campaign video that showed him blasting an elephant-shaped piñata with a shotgun.

The Tri-City Herald reported that the advertisement for Estakio Beltran generated a lot of criticism after it was posted last week, including from a group funded by former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, the Arizona Democrat who survived a gunshot wound to the head in 2011.

"Mr. Beltran ad showing him shooting a stuffed elephant — the national symbol of the Republican Party — is irresponsible and offensive," said the statement from Americans for Responsible Solutions.

Man found inside home on Kennedy compound

MA HYANNIS PORT — Police arrested a man they say broke into a home in the Kennedy compound once owned by John F. Kennedy and told investigators he was looking for singer Katy Perry.

Police in Barnstable responded to the home in Hyannis Port about 9:30 p.m. Tuesday after getting

THE CENSUS

\$100K

The value of one Tillamook cheese van, three of which were stolen Saturday from a hotel parking lot in Manteca, Calif. Two men were arrested Tuesday on suspicion of stealing the Volkswagen minibuses customized to look like bright orange blocks of cheese. The historic minibuses were on a tour promoting the Oregon-based Tillamook County Creamery Association's dairy products. A tip led investigators to the vehicles Monday in a storage locker about 50 miles from Manteca. Brian Lancaster, 32, and Ryan Monaco, 38, both of Sacramento, are being held for investigation of auto theft, possession of stolen vehicles, conspiracy and arson. The cheese vans were not damaged.



MARK LEFFINGWELL, THE (BOULDER, COLO.) DAILY CAMERA/AP

Taking the tube

Allyse Kehler, left, and Erik Summerside don their business attire to tube in Boulder Creek for the 7th annual Tube to Work Day in Boulder, Colo., on Tuesday. About 40 people participated. "Tube to Work Day is about alternative commuting and having a good time on the water," said co-founder Jeff Kagan. "It brings people together."

a call from a Kennedy family member who said a strange man picked up the phone at the home, and he was concerned about the well-being of his teenage son.

Police said they found James Lacroix, 53, in the kitchen of the home. He was charged with breaking and entering and was held pending arraignment.

Fire chief criticized for comments on blog

DE WILMINGTON — Wilmington's fire chief is being criticized for comments on his blog that appear to threaten reducing fire coverage in areas represented by council members who support budget cuts for the department.

The News Journal of Wilmington reported that Anthony Goode urged residents on the blog to speak out against eliminating funding for eight vacant firefighter jobs. He went on to write of the council members who think the jobs should be cut. "Those council districts will be the districts

that we will be forced to consider reducing coverage in!"

Council President Theo Gregory called Goode's comments "asinine," and Councilwoman Loretta Walsh says Goode appeared to be threatening residents.

Unattended bodies found at mortuary

TX FORT WORTH — Police are investigating after finding eight bodies unattended after a mortuary service was told to move out of its building in Fort Worth, Texas.

Police Sgt. Raymond Bush said the property owner a couple of weeks ago told Johnson Family Mortuary to vacate the building. He said the owner returned Tuesday morning to find eight bodies in the building but no workers.

Bush said the bodies were in various stages of decomposition and ranged from infants to adults.

No charges have been filed. The Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office has taken custody of the bodies.

Con man is accused of posing as federal agent

ND WILLISTON — A convicted con man is jailed in North Dakota's oil patch, awaiting trial on federal charges of impersonating an officer and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Court documents show Steven Goldmann tried to pass himself off as an FBI agent in Williston to score free coffee and a government rate at a budget hotel. He was initially arrested for failing to pay back victims he swindled out of thousands of dollars in Nashville, Tenn.

Goldmann's court-appointed attorney said the 26-year-old is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of military service in Iraq.

Workers at the Boomtown Babes Espresso shop said they suspected Goldmann was a scam artist after he took advantage of the policy to give free coffee to law enforcement.

1st woman appears in annual FDNY calendar

NY NEW YORK — The New York's famous calendar has a new look. For the first time, a female firefighter appears in the charity calendar of hard bodies.

Danae Mines, of Engine Co. 6 in the South Bronx, is Miss March. She signed calendars in Times Square on Tuesday.

The 11-year veteran booked the part after attending an open call for firefighters last year. She said she was discouraged from trying out at first because of her gender. Mines is one of only 41 female firefighters in the department.

The Calendar of Heroes celebrates the 150th anniversary of the fire department and features pictures of attractive firefighters for every month of the year. It went on sale Tuesday for \$15.95. Proceeds go to the FDNY Foundation, which promotes fire safety education.

From wire reports

FACES

First lady salutes Grammy Museum, music teachers

By SANDY COHEN
The Associated Press

Michelle Obama says every arts organization in the country should embrace the mission of the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles, which focuses on education.

Six million American children attend schools with no art or music classes, she said Wednesday at the museum's inaugural Jane Orter Education Award Luncheon.

"Arts are a way to channel ... pain and frustration into something meaningful and productive and beautiful, and every human being needs that, particularly our kids," she said. "And when they don't have that outlet, that's such a tremendous loss, not just for our kids but for our nation."

The Grammy Museum has worked with the first lady since 2009 to produce concerts and music education programs for young people, 1,000 stu-

dents to Washington, D.C., to see live performances.

"Those are some of my favorite events at the White House," Obama said.

The Grammy Museum has focused on education since it opened in 2008, said executive director Bob Santelli. The museum hosts more than 35,000 students a year and provides free curricula for various subjects that incorporate music in innovative ways.

Singer-songwriter Janelle Monae, who received the Jane Orter Artist Award, said music saved her when she was growing up in a rough neighborhood.

"Music helped me really deal with my emotions, when I could not articulate how frustrated I was," she said. "It gave me the opportunity to get it all out."

Her latest album, 2013's "The Electric Lady," was against sexism, presenting women as subjects rather than objects.



DAMIAN DOVARGANES/AP

First Lady Michelle Obama, right, hugs six-time Grammy nominee singer Janelle Monae at the Grammy Museum's Jane Orter Education Award Luncheon in Los Angeles on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old entertainer is active with the Grammy Museum's educational outreach, entertaining students at the White

House and at the museum.

"I hope we have more mentors," Monae said. "More mentors than superstars."

After accepting her microphone-shaped trophy, she brought out her band and performed a high-energy four-song set.

Samberg has advice for anyone fired from 'SNL'

The Associated Press

Andy Samberg wants ousted "Saturday Night Live" cast members to know there is life after the comedy show.

Brooks Wheelan tweeted earlier this week that he had been fired from the NBC sketch comedy series. A source familiar with casting but not authorized to speak on the record told The Associated Press that he would not be returning in the fall.

Talking to journalists Wednesday at a Television Critics Association set visit for Fox's "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," Samberg — a featured cast member on "SNL" from 2005 to 2012 — said, "If you were hired ... there's something good going on with you."

The 35-year-old returned to guest host earlier this year after winning the Golden Globe Award for best actor in a television series musical or comedy for "Nine-Nine." He said the only difference about hosting

was that he didn't worry about being cut from the episode.

He joked, "When I order a coffee, it comes sooner because I don't have to wait for 30 other people's

coffees. Other than that, it's almost exactly the same."

Samberg is happy to be back in California to film "Nine-Nine" because he was raised in Berkeley. He also says it's better for his marriage. (He wed musician Joanna Newsom last September.) "The schedule (now) is much better. ... 'SNL' is notoriously bad for a relationship," he said.

Beyonce leads nominations

Doing a visual album has paid off for Beyonce: She's the leading nominee at the MTV Video Music Awards.

MTV announced Thursday that Beyonce is up for eight moonman trophies, including video of the year for "Drunk in Love." Iggy Azalea and Eminem are nominated for seven awards each.

Pharrell is the only male nominated for the top prize. Along with Beyonce, his "Happy" will compete with Azalea's "Fancy," Miley Cyrus' "Wrecking Ball" and Sia's "Chandelier" for video of the year. Azalea is nominated twice for best pop video and female video, thanks to her other hit, the Ariana Grande-led smash "Problem."

The VMAs are Aug. 24 at the Forum in Inglewood, Calif. Performers include Grande, Usher and 5 Seconds of Summer.

Water mite named after J.Lo

Pop singer Jennifer Lopez may be thinking life is funny after a group of scientists named a water mite in her honor after discovering a new species near Puerto Rico.

The music of the Bronx, N.Y.-born entertainer who has Puerto Rican roots was a hit with the group while they wrote

about their findings, biologist Vladimir Pesic said in an email Wednesday.

"The reason behind the unusual choice of name for the new species is ... simple: J.Lo's songs and videos kept the team in a continuous good mood when writing the manuscript and watching World Cup Soccer 2014," said Pesic.

Pesic is the corresponding author of the study published Tuesday in the journal ZooKeys. Pesic and other scientists collected the newly baptized *Litarachna lopezae* mite from a coral reef in Mona Passage, a body of water that separates Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Other news

■ HBO says Bryan Cranston is reprising his role as President Lyndon Johnson in a TV adaptation of his recent Broadway debut. "All the Way" focuses on Johnson early in his presidency.

■ Jason Mraz announced Wednesday that he will tour the five boroughs of New York in September. He will kick off the tour Sept. 17 at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College.

■ Ron Howard will direct a documentary on the Beatles that focuses on the band's touring years during the early 1960s. Howard announced the project Wednesday. The film is being made with the cooperation of Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, Yoko Ono and Olivia Harrison. The Beatles company, Apple Corps, is co-producing the film.

■ Texas blues legend Johnny Winter, known for his lightning-fast guitar riffs, his striking long white hair and his collaborations with the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Creedence Clearwater Revival, has died. He was 70.



AP

Zhou Xun, right, and Archie Kao show their wedding rings to the crowd at a concert in China on Wednesday.

Actors exchange vows on concert stage

The closing act at a charity event, Chinese actress Zhou Xun sang two songs then stayed on stage for the best of encores.

Rumors had swirled beforehand that Zhou would be announcing her engagement to actor Archie Kao at Wednesday's concert in Hangzhou, the capital of China's eastern province of Zhejiang.

After she sang, she went backstage and reappeared in an ivory Chanel wedding gown, holding a bouquet. As the crowd broke into a loud cheer, she was joined on stage by Kao, wearing a black tuxedo. The couple surprised everyone by announcing that they were getting married on stage. They went on to exchange vows and rings in front of the audience.

After saying "I do," Kao told the crowd, "It's love that brought us all here tonight, and it's also love that brought me and my wife together."

Zhou, 39, is one of China's most sought-after actresses and made her Hollywood debut in "Cold Atlas." Kao, 44, is a Chinese-American actor whose credits include the television series "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."



"Brooklyn Nine-Nine" star Andy Samberg wants released "Saturday Night Live" cast members to know there is life beyond the show.

PAUL A. HEBERT, INVISION/AP

From The Associated Press

FAITH

From the cockpit to pulpit

Fighter pilot takes on a mission as pastor

By LESLIE BRIDGERS
Portland (Maine) Press Herald

LSOUTH PORTLAND, Maine — Lt. Col. Eric Samuelson never struggled to reconcile his roles as fighter pilot and church pastor, even in combat in Iraq, where he had a hand in destroying enemy vehicles. It didn't hurt that, as far as he knows, there was no one inside.

"I don't think I've ever had to cross that bridge," Samuelson, pastor of The Rock Church in Scarborough, said about harming another human.

Now he knows he'll never have to. Samuelson, 46, took the last flight of his 24-year military career on July 10.

As is tradition, his final training mission was turned into a ceremony of sorts. Flanked by two other F-15 fighter jets, Samuelson led the formation from Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield, Mass., to northern Maine for low-altitude training. After buzzing Portland, they headed for the jetport, where more than 100 members of his church were waiting in a parking lot by the runway off Westbrook Street.

"We're all a little excited for our pastor," said Melanie Malia, of Yarmouth.

She and others held signs for when he flew by. "From Cockpit to Pulpit Go Eric!" one said. "There Goes My Pastor!" read another.

Members of the church said they're proud of Samuelson's military service. They believe it gives him a broader perspective that lends itself to the practical brand of faith he brings to the congregation, which they described as their family.

Plus, Susan Davis said, "It just adds a cool factor."

Samuelson knew he wanted to be a pilot long before he decided to become a pastor. As a child in Syracuse, N.Y., he'd look up every time a plane passed overhead and pictured himself as the one flying it one day.

Shift in priorities

Since then, his priorities have shifted. It was during his 10 years as an active-duty Air Force member that Samuelson got involved with a church community in North Carolina and was inspired to become a pastor.

He had already studied theology and done Bible training as an undergraduate at Gordon College, a Christian school in Massachusetts. All he needed was to complete an apprenticeship to be ordained.

The position was easy enough to find. Samuelson's brother-in-law, Kirk Winters, had recently started The Rock Church in Scarborough and, with a growing congregation, needed help.

After three years working together,



PHOTOS BY SHAWN PATRICK OUELLETTE, PORTLAND (MAINE) PRESS HERALD/MCT

Above: Members of the Rock Church in Scarborough, Maine, cheer and look on as Lt. Col. Eric Samuelson, 46, made a final flight in the high-performance F-15, buzzing the Portland Jetport on July 10. **Below:** Samuelson flies his F-15 in formation with two others at the jetport.



Winters left for Bangor to start another nondenominational Christian church and left the southern Maine congregation to Samuelson.

When Samuelson moved to Maine, the church had about 100 members, he said. On a recent Sunday, some 700 people attended its four services.

"As the church grows like that, I just want to be more involved," said Samuelson, who was taken away several days a month to maintain his status in the Air National Guard.

There's also his desire to spend more time with his wife, Kim, and their four children, ages 8 to 15, who live in Gorham.

"I think the biggest thing is the strain that it puts both on my family and the shared responsibility to church and country," he said about his reason for retiring from the military.

Although the time commitments needed

for his two jobs conflict, he said, their purposes aren't at odds.

"My primary mission is to protect and defend," Samuelson said of his role as a fighter pilot. "There's nothing in the Christian culture and Scriptures that wouldn't protect the innocent and preserve peace."

Even, he said, if that required him to kill.

'A different air'

There are things, however, that separate him from most of his fellow fighter pilots. For one, he doesn't drink, though he's stood at the bar with his friends for hours, he said. But he sees how their demeanor changes when he walks in a room.

"There's a different air, a different attitude," he said.

What they all share is the rush of flying 600 miles an hour, 40,000 feet in the air,

as well as the call to serve their country, which Samuelson said was the same as the reason he came to serve his church.

"To do something meaningful for others," he said.

Judging by the crowd at the jetport, he's had an impact.

Hundreds of eyes searched the sky after the first onlooker spotted the jets just after 3 p.m. on July 10, when they appeared like little black dots above Maine Medical Center.

While the children pressed up against the chain-link fence, other church members stood on cars with iPhones and tablets. Scott Grant, who was an airplane enthusiast before he began attending the church, brought a ladder and a telephoto lens.

As the planes got closer, the crowd got louder with shouts of "They're coming!" and "Here we go!"

Just seconds after the jets were barely visible, they zoomed right in front of the hollering onlookers, who threw their arms in the air.

After circling overhead, the thunderous fighters flew by twice more, approaching the runway in single file. Samuelson, who was last in line, tilted his wings, as if he was waving back, before shooting into the sky, looping in the air and heading back to the base.

As others started to pack up, Patrice Silva kept watching, her hand over her mouth.

"It's exciting and sad at the same time," she said. "That's his farewell."

Samuelson, however, seemed to be taking it in stride.

"Everyone has to have a last mission," he said.

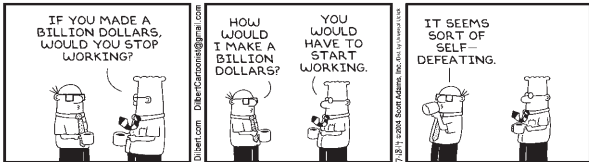
Hybrid-buoyed Toyota trying fuel cells

National temperature extremes
Hi: Tue., 118, Death Valley, Calif.
Lo: Tue., 36, Hettinger, N.D. and Hill
City, S.D.

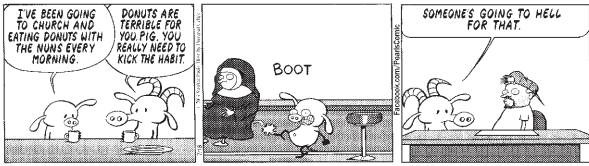
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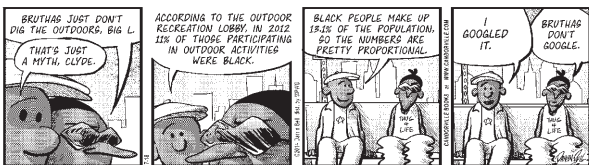
Pearls Before Swine



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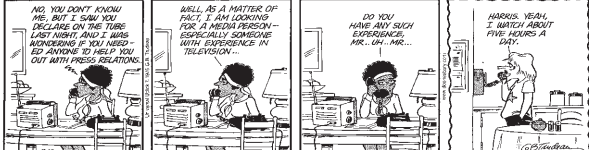
Candorville



Get Fuzzy



Doonesbury



Fort Knox



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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45	46	47			48	49						
50					51					52		
53					54					55		

ACROSS

- Scratch
- Applaud
- Banshee's sound
- "— Little Tpet"
- Sitarist's rendition
- Wheelbase terminus
- San Francisco carrier
- Touched
- Relaxed
- Time of your life?
- "Monty Python" opener
- Passengers' pub
- Cereal choices
- Crafty
- Position
- Leisurely pace
- Pirouette pivot
- Put together
- Honest politician
- Bashful
- Like forks
- It's usually filled with freight
- Pistol
- Ostrich's cousin
- Soap ingredient
- Frenzied
- Cops' transport
- Furniture brand
- Swerve
- Former spacecraft
- Paraphernalia

DOWN

- Islinglass
- He loves, to Livy
- Playwright David
- Peaks
- Shoestrings
- Khan title
- Biblical tale
- Item for mass consumption?
- Tin Man's prop
- Poorly
- Allow
- Frankie or Cleo
- Festive
- Family
- Staffer
- Oboe insert
- Spill the beans
- Sci-fi prefix
- Pinnacle
- Sauce source
- Fencing moves
- Went for the gold?
- Muppet eaks
- The Green Wave
- Scented wood
- Pumpkin or cucumber
- Wile E.'s provider
- Peacock's pride
- Blunders
- Peruke
- Eisenhower
- Meadow
- Who (Fr.)

Answer to Previous Puzzle

L	A	M	B		C	L	I	P		P	I	N
I	L	I	E		H	O	L	E		O	N	E
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S	T	A	T		E	D				A	G	E
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E	Y	E			T	E	E	M		E	K	S

7-18

CRYPTOQUIP

XNBJH ATKAB ZPLRCJ'A
GLXCLN ATPGN ZPJGAYBZABJH
GNYVNJAG, B CNZBCNC AP
RNA VOATPJG XN VOATPJG.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M SO DEEPLY WORRIED WHILE MAKING THIS GOULASH. I SUPPOSE I'LL KEEP STEWING.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: A equals T

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OPINION

Ospreys help Marines protect, assist our allies – on Okinawa and beyond

BY BRIG. GEN. STEVE R. RUDDER

The MV-22B Osprey, a tilt-rotor aircraft that takes off and lands like a helicopter, has operated in the Asia-Pacific theater for nearly two years, and with it has come amazing benefits for the Japan-U.S. alliance and for partner nations where the Osprey operates.

While the Osprey was newly introduced in Japan in 2012, the squadrons are not additions to the Marine Air Group. They simply replaced, with a one-for-one swap, an older less-capable aircraft, the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter. The CH-46 Sea Knights served us well for 50 years, including service in Vietnam, and the time for replacement had come throughout the Marine Corps. Starting 10 years ago on the East Coast of the U.S. at Camp Lejeune, N.C., then on the West Coast of the U.S. at Camp Pendleton, Calif., the Osprey came into service as we systematically replaced CH-46 Sea Knights.

Ospreys have served across the world, in combat and humanitarian situations including service in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Haiti and many other places. Finally, beginning the replacement in October 2012 and completing it last year, the very newest and best Ospreys — with highly trained and experienced pilots, crews and maintenance teams — came to Okinawa, putting the best and latest modern equipment we have to offer in Japan where it can best serve the people of Japan and the region as a whole.

The reason for the leap in capability is seen when you look at what the Osprey can do compared with the older Sea Knight it replaced. The Osprey can travel twice as fast, carry three times as much weight and go four times farther than the Sea Knight. In addition, it can refuel in midair, extending its range indefinitely.

This is not just a strategic benefit for the Japan-U.S. alliance; it is also a considerable benefit for Okinawa, where some of the Ospreys in the Asia-Pacific theater operate. One benefit to having such a long flight range is the ability to regularly go outside Okinawa prefecture for exercises and training events, increasing our ability to partner with regional allies and friends while giving the pilots valuable training experience. That reduces the amount of time the Ospreys spend on Okinawa. For well over a year, Ospreys have been used during training in mainland Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, Guam and across the seas as they deploy aboard the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit. Local residents on Okinawa have told us that they do not see nearly as many Ospreys around as they used to see Sea Knights! It is not because they are not being utilized, but because they are being used so much more and farther away from Okinawa. With the Sea Knight, that could not be done because of their limited range.

As an example of the capability benefits brought by the Osprey, during Operation Tomodachi our Sea Knights responded to



LISA TOURTELOR/Stars And Stripes

Visitors to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa, on June 8 line up to catch a glimpse of the Marines' newest aircraft to the island — the MV-22 Osprey.

northeastern Japan. They took approximately three days to reach the region, having to refuel and island-hop the entire way. Had Ospreys been stationed on Okinawa at the time, the response time would have been much faster.

In fact, during Operation Damayan, Ospreys flew about the same distance — 1,118 miles — to the Philippines in three hours. The Ospreys evacuated 1,200 people and delivered more than 20 tons of supplies to remote areas where neither traditional airplanes nor helicopters could reach. That gives you an idea of the tremendous capability the Osprey brings.

Simply put, the Osprey can respond faster and farther to any situation where we might be called, including our most frequent mission — humanitarian assistance and disaster response. The Osprey is the ideal aircraft to respond to a disaster or any remote area because it can go so far and fast, carry a great deal of supplies and personnel, and it does not need a runway to land.

The Osprey is also quieter than the helicopters we operate — partly because it can quickly convert to airplane mode. While in helicopter mode, the sound it creates is generally quieter than that of any Marine Corps helicopter as depicted in the 2012 noise study. And when it switches to airplane mode, the sound becomes even less. Because the aircraft is much more fuel efficient in airplane mode, and can go much faster, we convert to aircraft mode quickly, making for a faster departure from Okinawa than the Sea Knight ever could. In addition, the Osprey can fly much higher than other rotary aircraft, making for a quieter experience for people on the ground as well. Local residents and leaders around Marine Corps Air Station Futenma tell us the air station is much quieter than before the Ospreys arrived.

The state-of-the-art technology that the Osprey uses is transferable to our ultra-modern Osprey flight simulators, allowing our pilots to conduct many of their training sessions in the simulator on the ground, which could not be done with the CH-46 Sea Knights. That reduces the number of training flights.

The Osprey is also very safe, with an excellent record demonstrating it is one of the safest aircraft in the entire U.S. Department of Defense. All major systems on the aircraft — including the computer, navigation, hydraulics and fuel systems — are triple-redundant, meaning that it

has its backup systems backed up. Keeping safety as a top priority, maintenance is executed with care, diligence and oversight. Our professional crews — who are well-versed in international flights standards — maintain high performance standards and are also diligent in implementing local agreements pertaining to flight paths and noise abatement.

The U.S. Marine Corps is the world's most reliable crisis response force, and the speed and ability of our response is because we always train as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force, or MAGTF. This MAGTF is always composed of air, ground and logistics elements operating together, and it is what makes the Marine Corps so efficient at crisis response. With the Osprey as part of that MAGTF, our overall response ability is significantly strengthened.

The Osprey has gathered many supporters, especially here on Okinawa. Each year we open every base to the public, and invite friends and neighbors to see how Marines live and work. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma opened its gates in June during the annual Futenma Flightline Fair. This was the second year we had the MV-22 Osprey on display, and again this year we had thousands of visitors. The one aircraft that everyone wants to see is the Osprey, and we received many positive comments, as well as answered numerous questions from Okinawans who told us the local media has not provided them with accurate information.

We have even seen the establishment of the Okinawa Osprey Fan Club, the Fence Clean Project, the Heart Clean Project and Operation Arigato, which have thousands of members. Members gather regularly outside the gates of MCAS Futenma to thank our Marines for their service and to voice their support for the U.S.-Japan defense alliance. I want to thank them for their willingness to express their appreciation.

For more than six decades, the Japan-U.S. security treaty has provided peace, security and prosperity to not only our great nations, but also to the entire Asia-Pacific region and the larger international community. I believe the Osprey has tremendously contributed to making the U.S.-Japan defense alliance and our combined abilities the strongest they have ever been.

Brig. Gen. Steve R. Rudder is commanding general of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and is headquartered on Camp Foster, Okinawa. For more information on the MV-22 Osprey, please visit: www.okinawa.usmc.mil/MV22/MV22.html.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

US invested in Afghan recruit Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The latest chapter in U.S. efforts to nation-build in Afghanistan is the attempt by Secretary of State John Kerry to salvage the country's presidential election.

What America wants Afghanistan to do, for three reasons, is elect a credible president to succeed Hamid Karzai, ostensibly in charge of the country since 2001. First, having a democratically elected president means that the United States can leave in an orderly fashion, having been a major military, political and economic presence for 13 years. President Barack Obama would prefer to leave an Afghanistan that does not immediately descend into the sort of chaos that characterizes Iraq, which U.S. forces left in 2011.

The second reason Washington wants a duly elected president in charge is that Karzai refused to sign the agreement extending the U.S. presence from 2014 to 2016, but both of the candidates still in the race have promised to do so if elected.

The third is the United States still has more than 30,000 troops in Afghanistan, will leave behind an Afghan army that has been U.S.-trained and armed to fight the Taliban, and has many projects that have been carried out and many bases and much property to turn over to the Afghans.

As it stands now, the election has been a disaster. Former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah won the first round in April over former prime minister Nourul Hudaib, but failed to win 50 percent of the votes, prompting a runoff. Ghani, the candidate of Karzai, was announced to have finished first in the second round in June. Abdullah credibly cried "foul." One suspicious detail is that the vote total in the second round was 23 percent higher than that of the first round. Maybe Ghani campaigned more effectively or maybe ballot boxes were stuffed, a common phenomenon in Afghanistan.

Kerry hurried to Kabul to try to retrieve the situation. Both candidates agreed to a recount of the 8.1 million ballots and both agreed to form a coalition government when the counting was done. The United States and other nations have the privilege of paying for the recount, which for U.S. troops will be part of the ticket home.

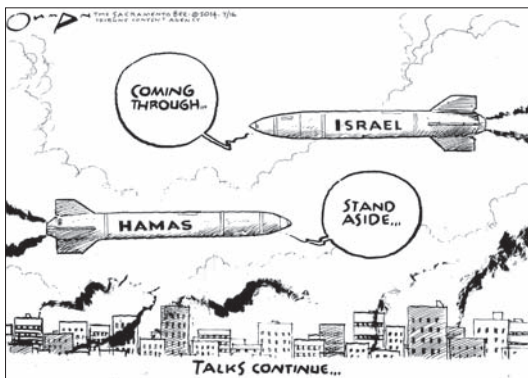
For Israel, peril is all around The (Charleston, S.C.) Post and Courier

President Barack Obama has offered to broker a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, a standard U.S. response to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in Gaza. But the current rocket fire from Gaza into Israel is different from past episodes, and the usual cease-fire may not answer Israel's new peril.

Hamas took credit for trying to destroy Israel's nuclear reactor at Dimona. Three months later, the Israel Defense Forces' Two-fell short and one was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system.

Had the attacks succeeded — and more are expected — widespread exposure to nuclear radiation could have resulted. At the least, Hamas' terrorism campaign would have achieved a new level.

Around the same time, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri declared, "All Israelis have become legitimate targets." He claimed that the deaths of seven civilians in an Israeli air raid on Khan Yunis, a Gaza settlement, justified this blood claim. Israel's reply to Hamas rocket attacks has indeed been far more deadly than the



provocation. But that is due to three things: the ineptness of most Hamas attacks, the roughly 90 percent success of Israel's Iron Dome system in destroying the missiles, and most likely to do damage, and the practice of Hamas to put its missiles, command posts and other military targets in the midst of dense civilian populations.

The heightened threat level may lead to an Israeli invasion of Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israel also has to worry about the threat from Hezbollah in Lebanon, with as many as 30,000 missiles, including some that have GPS guidance systems. Hezbollah also gets its weapons from Iran, with the help of the Assad government of Syria. It can be expected to unleash an attack if Iran thinks it is desirable. With Iran's help Assad seems to be winning the civil war in Syria, but it is not over yet. Indeed, it has spread to Iraq and now threatens Jordan.

Hamas' aggression against Israel — the murders, the missiles, the rhetoric — threatens to drag Israel into the wider Middle East conflict. A cease-fire may put a temporary stop to the pressure from Iran's proxies. But Israel's heightened peril will remain. And that intensifies the need for the international community, including the U.S., to help resolve not only the latest violence, but finally the intransigent Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Brazil finds games not all fun The (Memphis, Tenn.) Commercial Appeal

Against daunting odds, a slow pace of construction, demonstrations by displaced slum dwellers, long distances, impenetrable traffic and the collapse of one hastily built overpass — Brazil pulled off what is universally and rightly regarded as a successful soccer World Cup. The competition was watched by record crowds worldwide, including a 100 percent increase in U.S. viewership over the last World Cup.

It is not too much to say that the fate of the government of President Dilma Rousseff, who faces an election in October, was riding on Brazil being able to pull off a major international sporting event. Then, too, there is the matter of paying the \$14 billion-plus cost of hosting the cup, but Brazil is a wealthy nation and, besides, it shares South America's relaxed attitude about carrying large amounts of debt.

Few of the brick-and-mortar benefits from the cup materialized, and Brazil, which fancied itself the nation's home of soccer, must still deal with the lingering aftereffects of its 7-1 humiliation at the hands of eventual winner Germany [in the semifinals]. However, there looms on the horizon an even larger event to take Brazilians' minds off that sporting catastrophe. Brazil will play host to the 2016 Summer Olympics, an event that will dwarf the

World Cup in size and cost.

Before the World Cup there were riots by Brazilians, who felt the money could be better spent, for example, on schools and housing. Having been deprived of promised civic benefits once, it's hard to imagine Brazilians exhibiting similar forbearance for the Summer Olympics.

Miracles do happen; the fact that Brazil pulled off the World Cup was one, but maybe a second one is too much to ask for.

A fire DOD needs to extinguish The Wall Street Journal

The Obama administration is asking Congress for more money to fix substandard weapons, especially in the dry West, but perhaps it could start by getting its own agencies off firefighters' backs. We're speaking of the Defense Department's recent and gratuitous fix of environmental consciousness, which has disrupted disaster efforts in peak wildfire season.

A bipartisan group of 25 senators led by Arizona's John McCain on July 10 sent Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel a letter demanding an explanation for the Pentagon's June decision to stop programs that supply federal equipment to states for fighting wildfires. The DOD suspended the programs on grounds the equipment didn't meet the latest federal emissions standards. As if real fires aren't major air-polluting events.

At issue are two programs — the Federal Excess Personal Property Program and the Firefighter Property Program — that every year loan local firefighting units more than \$150 million of equipment that the federal government no longer needs. The programs supply tens of thousands of items — trucks, pumps, generators, engine parts — and have become a lifeline for smaller, all-volunteer fire departments that can't afford \$500,000 for a new tanker. This is more than charity, given that the vast majority of the wildfires these local units battle occur on land owned by the federal government.

But in mid-June the DOD suspended the transfer of trucks and generators, many of which were made for military use with diesel engines that don't meet the Environmental Protection Agency's latest emissions standards. According to the Defense Logistics Agency, which handles the transfers, its employees were wading through paperwork in May and suddenly feared that they weren't abiding by a decades-old agreement with the EPA to submit to Clean Air Act standards. The DOD's response to its self-generated confusion was to suspend the program, leaving thousands of local firefighting teams without help.

An enormous state outcry caused the EPA and the DOD to announce last week that they are restarting the programs. The wizards at the DOD have concluded that the EPA grants a "conditional" security exemption to its emissions rules for transferred

military equipment. Wonderful.

Yet proving that no government mistake goes without punishing others, the agencies have nonetheless suggested that this program restart may now come with new requirements — including that local firefighters track and ultimately return every piece of equipment so the feds can destroy it. We can't have rogue, unemissions-friendly generators roaming the countryside.

That inspired McCain's letter to Hagel asking to know how this mess happened, as well as the details on any new requirements. Local fire units have enough trouble without worrying that the feds will suddenly seize their fire trucks keys. This administration can't even give things away without making a mess of it.

Let 'dental therapists' help The Washington Post

In 2009, 830,000 visits to emergency rooms around the country could have been prevented if the patients had seen a dentist earlier. In 2011, more than half of children on Medicaid went without dental care.

Those facts lie behind the story of Deamonte Driver, a Maryland seventh-grader who died of a preventable infection that spread from his mouth to his brain in 2007. Maryland pushed through some reforms following Deamonte's death, but the situation across the country has not dramatically improved.

Everyone seems to agree there is a dental care crisis in the United States, particularly among people in poor or rural areas. People who have dental insurance or the means to pay out of pocket can get a high level of care. Those without struggle. Medicaid must cover dental services, but trying finding a dentist who participates in the program, which offers small reimbursements. Only perhaps a third of dentists accept Medicaid. Deamonte's mother faced this problem. In less-developed areas, sometimes regardless of their ability to pay, patients may have to travel hours to get care.

One potential solution is to license less-qualified "dental therapists" to carry out some basic services, such as filling cavities, that currently only dentists perform. Behind that effort is the experience of more than 50 countries and a few states that allow these midlevel providers to practice in public and private settings. Most recently, the Pew Charitable Trusts released its second report on how dental therapists are working in a few places around the United States and Canada. The results are encouraging.

In the two private dental practices and the three public health dental operations the Pew researchers examined, dental therapists counseled patients, extracted teeth, filled cavities and performed other relatively simple procedures. The number of severe dental issues that arose during the basic work taken care of, dentists could focus on complicated procedures, which also allowed them to bill more. Overall, the private practices brought in more than enough revenue to cover the dental therapists' salaries.

Some states are considering bills to license dental therapists, but many dentists have been skeptical. The American Dental Association recently released a plan to improve access to dental care, and it left out dental therapists. Instead, the dentists' group favors more community coordinators who would refer patients to oral health and help them find a dentist. Instead of a focus on dental therapists, said ADA President Charles Norman, his group favors a broader package that would address many problems at once. Besides, he said, many dentists might find that dental therapists don't make the financial sense. The group also wants to help them find a dentist. Instead of a focus on dental therapists, said ADA President Charles Norman, his group favors a broader package that would address many problems at once. Besides, he said, many dentists might find that dental therapists don't make the financial sense. The group also wants to help them find a dentist. 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for light flyweight title.

NBA

Some win, some lose as free agency winds down

By BRODERICK TURNER
Los Angeles Times

Once LeBron James announced, "I'm Coming Home," to Cleveland last Friday, the free-agency floodgates opened, with the player moves coming fast and furious.

James was the Pied Piper, the one who set in motion so much change in the NBA that it left some teams with high hopes, some with despair and some thinking they remain on the right course for next season.

James' decision to return to the Cleveland Cavaliers for a second stint, obviously made them the big winner in the free-agency marketplace, and it left his old Miami Heat team a loser because it lost the best player on the planet.

So here is a quick look at the teams who are the winners, losers and wild cards during the free-agency period:

Winners

Cleveland: James spent his first seven NBA seasons playing for the Cavaliers, before spending the last four years in Miami. The Cavaliers had a woeful 97-215 record without him.

The Cavaliers drafted Andrew Wiggins with the No. 1 overall pick in the NBA draft last month. And after James' decision, the Cavaliers signed free-agent small forward sharpshooter Mike Miller, who won two NBA championships with James in Miami.



Gasol

Chicago: The signing of former Los Angeles Lakers All-Star Pau Gasol, and getting Creighton forward Doug McDermott in a draft-day trade from Denver should not wonders for the offensively challenged Bulls.

Gasol averaged 17.4 points, 9.7 rebounds and 3.4 assists in 60 games last season for the Lakers. He's an upgrade at power forward over Carlos Boozer, who was just waived by the Bulls via the NBA's one-time amnesty provision.

The return of a healthy Derrick Rose, if he resembles the player who won the 2011 MVP award, will make Chicago big winners.

San Antonio: Coach Gregg Popovich, considered the best coach in the NBA, has agreed to a contract extension, and that should be enough to make the 2014 NBA champions contenders again.

It also helps that Tim Duncan, 38, has decided to play next season. Plus, the Spurs resigned key reserves Boris Diaw and Patty Mills and drafted UCLA's Kyle Anderson, whose style of play fits San Antonio's approach to the game.

Oklahoma City: The Thunder didn't land any big-name free agents, but it still has MVP Kevin Durant, Russell Westbrook

and Serge Ibaka, and that is more than enough to contend.

Signing wingman Anthony Morrow, a very good outside scoring threat, helps fill a spot after the exits of Thabo Sefolosha and Derek Fisher.

Losers



Anthony

New York: The Knicks got Anthony back, but that's about it.

The Knicks' Big Three consists of Anthony, new president Phil Jackson and new coach Fisher.

Jackson needs better players, Fisher needs coaching experience and Anthony will have

to play the best hoops of his life to give the Knicks a chance of reaching the playoffs.

Los Angeles Lakers: They failed to get Carmelo Anthony or James, proving the Lakers are no longer the free-agent destination they used to be.

Lakers fans haven't been jumping for joy, either, after the team traded for point guard Jeremy Lin from Houston, or the re-signing of Nick Young and Jordan Hill.

The Lakers don't even have a head coach — though Byron Scott appears to be the front-runner.

Miami: It's impossible for the Heat to make up for the loss of James.

But the Heat did rally some by re-signing Dwyane Wade, Chris Bosh and Mario Chalmers, acquiring point guard Shabazz Napier in a draft-day trade from Charlotte and signing free agents Josh McRoberts and Danny Granger.

Wild Cards

Washington: They got veteran Pierce (to replace Trevor Ariza) to show young fellows John Wall and Bradley Beal what it's going to take to win a title. They also signed free agents Kris Humphries and DeJuan Blair to shore up their frontcourt.

Houston: The Rockets lost offensive-minded Chandler Parsons in free agency to Dallas, but Houston acquired a better two-way player in Ariza to replace Parsons at small forward.

Toronto: By re-signing point guard Kyle Lowry and trading for guard Lou Williams, the Raptors improved their chances of reaching the playoffs in back-to-back seasons.

Los Angeles Clippers: They wanted a better backup big man, and got that when they signed center Spencer Hawes. They lost talented backup point guard Darren Collison to the Sacramento Kings, but signed Jordan Farmar to back up Chris Paul.

Brooklyn: They lost coach Jason Kidd to Milwaukee, but gained a top-notch replacement in Lionel Hollins. The Nets got Jarrett Jack from Cleveland and they re-signed Alan Anderson, but they also lost Paul Pierce (Wizards) and Shaun Livingston (Warriors) in free agency.



MICHAEL Dwyer/AP

With LeBron James heading back to Cleveland after a four-year, two-title stint in Miami, is the era of NBA "superteams" over? Some observers think so, and welcome a return to a more balanced playing field when it comes to competing for championships.

Leveling the field

James' decision heralds a return to balance amongst NBA teams chasing championship

By TIM REYNOLDS
The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Patrick Ewing sees the parallels between then and now.

For 13 straight seasons, Ewing averaged at least 20 points. He was a superstar, the toast of New York, the city's biggest star when he was the face of the Knicks' franchise. During the stretch when Ewing was at his peak, his combination of points, rebounds and blocked shots made him unquestionably one of the game's elite.

"When I played, it was mostly one superstar per team," Ewing said.

And that, in the end, was a problem for Ewing. For as good as he was — not to mention the likes of Charles Barkley, Dominique Wilkins, George Gervin and many others — his enormous talent never carried him to an NBA championship.

He sees the league heading back that way now. When LeBron James left Miami last week for a return to the Cleveland Cavaliers, the power structure of the league shifted as well. And while there's obviously a team loaded with future Hall of Famers in San Antonio, and plenty of teams with two players worthy of at least superstar argument, there's nothing now that can mirror what the Heat had.

James' latest decision also gives Cleveland a better chance to win a title.

But like Ewing, Barkley and plenty of others know, a more-balanced playing field

across the NBA means many other teams figure to have a better chance as well.

"There's a lot of money being given today and there's a lot of teams with more great players than there were in the past," said Paul Silas, James' first coach in Cleveland. "I really like to see the teams fight against each other and having more than one have a chance to win the whole thing."

Welcome to the new NBA.

Or, rather, the updated NBA.

Sure, 16 teams go to the playoffs, but really, how many were legitimate title contenders last season? The entire season a year ago seemed like Indiana and Miami were preordained to meet in the Eastern Conference finals — and that's exactly what happened. James changes sides, a few other moves get made, and now there's probably a half-dozen teams in the East alone thinking they'll be good enough to be one of the last two teams standing next June.

Ask NBA executives, many of whom aren't upset to see Miami's stranglehold as East favorites come to an end, and they say it's all a good thing for the game.

"Much more competitive this year," Knicks President Phil Jackson said. "The East last year, I thought until the very end when the Knicks made a run, Toronto got going, Washington got going, there were a lot of teams languishing under or around .500. But I think this year, more talent's spread around the East and I think it's going to be very competitive."

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NFL/COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Ellington's focus now solely on football

Two-sport athlete at South Carolina has given up basketball

By PETE IACOBELLI
The Associated Press

MONCKS CORNER, S.C. — Gone are the days when Bruce Ellington would rush from a basketball workout with South Carolina teammates to a football meeting room to learn the complex schemes of coach Steve Spurrier. Ellington's only focus is the San Francisco 49ers and making an impact on the NFL.

"It was fun, all the rushing around," said Ellington, taken in the fourth round by the 49ers. "I thought I could do and I went after it."

Ellington hosted a youth camp recently at his high school with his older cousin, Arizona Cardinals running back Andre Ellington who twice rushed for 1,000 yards while playing college ball at Clemson.

Bruce Ellington actually pared down his workload in college after playing three sports — he ran track, too — at Berkeley High. He helped his school win a state football title his senior year and many figured he slide nicely into South Carolina's rising football program.

Instead, he decided his future was solely on the court. He led the Gamecocks in scoring as a freshman in 2010-11, starting all 30 games. But when South Carolina struggled to win games, Ellington felt like he was missing out not playing alongside football standouts like Alshon Jeffery, Marcus Lattimore and Stephane Gilmore — also Palmetto State prep stars.

"I didn't say much about it," Andre Ellington said. "But I knew he was going to miss football."

So Bruce began a two-sport odyssey that continued for three years until January, when he gave up his senior seasons in basketball and football to jump to the NFL.

"It took some time to realize what I wanted to do," Ellington said. "This is it."

Ellington believes he will continue improving in the pros. At 5-foot-9, Ellington is



JEFF CHU/AP

San Francisco 49ers wide receiver Bruce Ellington catches a pass during minicamp in Santa Clara, Calif. Ellington played two sports at South Carolina, even choosing basketball over football at one point, before declaring a year early for the NFL Draft.

tied for the shortest receiver on the 49ers' roster. But Ellington's got a relentless nature for finding open space and holding onto almost everything thrown his way, said his former high school coach Jerry Brown.

"Football's played on a big field and it's hard to track someone like Bruce who's got so much agility," Brown said.

Ellington found his football form as a sophomore when he was South Carolina's top receiver with 40 catches for 600 yards and seven touchdowns, including a 32-yard grab with 11 seconds left to beat Michigan in the Outback Bowl two years ago.

Ellington was again South Carolina's top receiver in 2013. His best regular-season showing came at Missouri when he had 10

catches for 136 yards and two touchdowns in the 27-24, double-overtime victory. Ellington saved the game in the first overtime with his fourth-and-goal, 15-yard TD catch to keep things going.

"I think that may have been my favorite moment," he said, smiling.

Ellington capped his college career with his most versatile game: He had nine catches for 140 yards and two touchdowns to beat Wisconsin in the Capital One Bowl. Ellington also threw a nine-yard TD pass to quarterback Connor Shaw.

Ellington kept his football mentality while continually playing and training with basketball teammates. South Carolina basketball coach Frank Martin never saw Ellington's intensity drop, no matter what

he had done to prepare for football.

Ellington, 22, swears he never got worn down at playing or prepping for two major college sports at a Southeastern Conference school.

"I'm a young guy," he said. "It's hard to get tired."

Ellington believes he can bring that drive to the 49ers. The team hasn't put expectations on him and he won't either, eager to prove his worth when the games start. And no, he says he's not planning a call to the Golden State Warriors to see if he can get in some NBA action in his down time.

"I'm just going to work hard, give it a hundred [percent] every time I step on the field and keep on chasing the dream," he said.

Bielema stands by 'facts' of dangerous offenses

By JOHN ZENOR
The Associated Press

HOOVER, Ala. — Bret Bielema didn't bite this time. Not really.

For the second straight year, the Arkansas coach had to respond at Southeastern Conference media days to another coach's skepticism about his contention that fast-paced offenses are hazardous to defensive players.

A year ago, Auburn's Gus Malzahn said he initially thought that was a joke and Bielema fired back that he's no comedian.

On Wednesday, Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said the contention that uptempo offenses lead to more injuries is "fiction."

"I don't buy the health issue in any way,"

Pinkel said. "No one has ever come to me all those years and said, 'Gosh, I'm really concerned about the health of our teams playing these fast-paced offenses.'"

Bielema's response a few hours later was calm and good-humored, but he's no less convinced of his stance either.

"Not to carry from last year but I'm probably more of a reality-based movie guy more than fiction," said Bielema, who lobbied for a 10-second minimum between plays. "I deal more in what I know, what I see, what I believe. Have I softened in my view of fast-paced offenses? If you ask me in that tense, you're asking me have I softened my view on player safety. The answer would be no."

The differing views help make the season-opener with defending SEC champion

Auburn a little more intriguing. Bielema and Malzahn certainly are polar opposites in their preferred offensive styles. The Arkansas coach said maybe he's not going to break bread with Malzahn but he's also not going to "throwing bread at him and rocks and everything else."

Mainly, the Razorbacks view the Aug. 30 opener as a chance to make quite a statement that they've come a long way since going winless in league games during Bielema's debut season. He said it's been a motivator for his team since the schedule was announced.

Bielema is hardly guaranteeing a dramatic turnaround in Year 2, but said positives he's seen in areas like academics, off-the-field behavior should translate into more success on the field.

"When that thing comes full-circle, we're going to start to win," Bielema said. "When we win, it's going to be able to maintain a winning style than this other thing that we've been living through."

Another positive from the offseason, Bielema said, has been what he's seen from quarterback Brandon Allen, who struggled at times last season for the league's worst pass offense.

Bielema said Allen had "probably one of the best offseasons that I've ever seen a positional player have, let alone a quarterback."

"He's gotten stronger, he's gotten better mentally," the coach said. "He understands expectations he needs to fulfill as a quarterback."

OLYMPICS

One down, one to go

Brazil turns its attention to 2016 Summer Games

By STEPHEN WADE
The Associated Press

BRASIL just pulled off the World Cup. Next up is Rio de Janeiro's 2016 Olympics, which poses an even bigger challenge.

Cement trucks are busy, creating billowing dust clouds, and girders are rising along Avenida Embaixador Abelardo Bueno, the main road running in front of the main Olympic Park in the suburb of Barra da Tijuca.

"It's going, it's going," said a worker at the construction site, wearing an orange helmet, blue overalls and introducing himself as Mauricio Lima.

Rust-orange beams sprouted behind him as he talked, a superstructure that in two years will become the Olympic media and broadcast centers.

"There is a lot to do, but things are moving," he added.

The World Cup overcame fears about protests, half-finished stadiums and chaotic transport to deliver an exciting tournament that culminated with Germany's 1-0 victory over Argentina in extra time in the final.

Brazil's humiliating 7-1 loss against Germany in the semifinals was a blow to the home country, and the collapse a week ago of an overpass — part of a World Cup project in the southeast city of Belo Horizonte — killed two people. Eight workers died in World Cup stadium construction accidents.

Rio's Olympics have had their own problems.

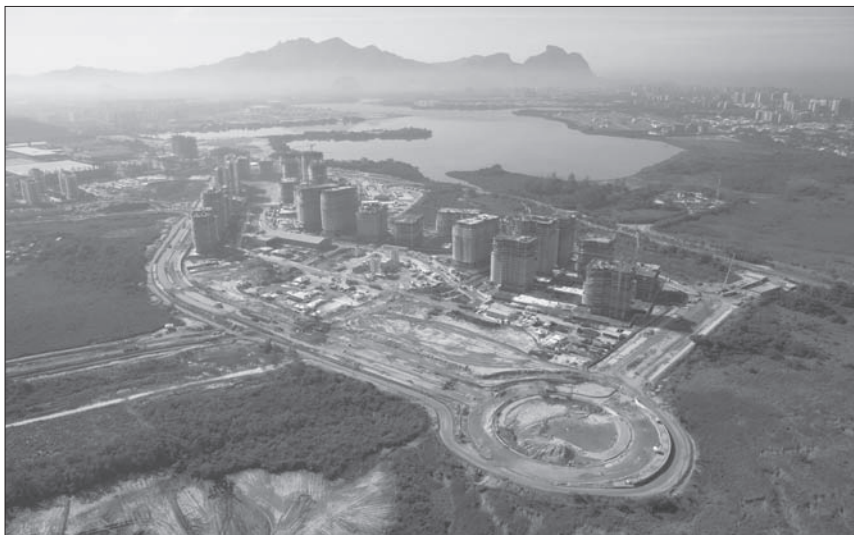
A few months ago, International Olympic Committee Vice President John Coates called the city's preparations the "worst" in memory. Other IOC members openly lambasted Rio. In response, the IOC sent in executive director Gilbert Felli to work as a troubleshooter.

Felli believes the World Cup gave the Olympics a boost.

"The perception of the Brazilians is much more positive," Felli said. "It's good for the games. They have better trust in themselves to deliver the games. My view is to say ... the Brazilians will deliver excellent games. But we have to work every day for it. Nothing is a done deal."

Deadlines are still tight, and Felli described some as "tense, very tense." The problem areas include:

- a shortage of hotel rooms
- severe water pollution at the sailing venue in Guanabara Bay
- a late start at the second large cluster of venues called Deodoro in northern Rio
- completion of a subway line



LEO CORREA/AP

Construction on the Athletes Village continues as Rio de Janeiro prepares to host the Summer Olympics in 2016.

‘The Brazilians will deliver excellent games. But we have to work every day for it. Nothing is a done deal.’

Gilbert Felli

International Olympic Committee Executive Director

extension from central Rio to Barra da Tijuca, site of the Olympic Park

■ construction of a public golf course several miles from the Olympic Park.

The Rio Games, with events scattered around four venue clusters, could present transportation nightmares in a city cut up by mountains, tunnels and poor roads. About 60 percent of the events will be at Olympic Park, about 15 miles west of central Rio.

The Olympic Park and nearby golf course is being built in a wetlands/swamp area. Small alligators have been spotted wandering around the golf course, and visitors constantly complain about swarming mosquitoes in the Olympic Park area and the neighboring athletes village.

Track and field will be run at the Joao Havelange Olympic Stadium, which was built in 2007 for

the Pan American Games.

In the wake of the World Cup, former IOC marketing director Michael Payne warned against complacency.

"The danger would be anybody having a false sense of security," Payne said. "The Olympics are a far more complicated undertaking to deliver than the World Cup."

For example:

- The World Cup involved 736 athletes; the Olympics 10,500.
- The World Cup is one championship; the Olympics are dozens.
- The World Cup drags on for a month; the Olympics are densely packed into just over two weeks.
- Host-generated broadcasting for the World Cup amounted to a few hundred hours; the Rio Olympics will generate about 5,000 hours.

AP Sports Writer Stephen Wilson contributed to this report.



LEO CORREA/AP

Olympic Park is being built in an area previously occupied by the Jacarepagua Autodrome. The Rio de Janeiro Olympics promise to be an even larger challenge than the World Cup.

MLB

Brewers turn it around from year ago

By GENARO C. ARMAS

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The post-game music was turned up a couple notches in the Brewers clubhouse. Finally, a victory to savor after a seven-game losing streak.

Yet for all the trouble on the field the last couple weeks, the tough stretch pales in comparison to what Milwaukee went through a year ago.

From All-Star break to All-Star break, the Brewers have gone from worst to first in the NL Central.

"I don't remember how many games we were out (last year), but I don't think we were in the race at all," All-Star third baseman Aramis Ramirez said after Sunday's 11-2 victory over St. Louis that gave the Brewers a one-game lead on the Cardinals in the division.

The first-place Brewers are 53-43 at this year's break. In 2013 they were 38-56, 19½ games out and in last place.

"It was tough, last year was a tough year," said Ramirez, the National League starter at third. "Compared to this year, we're in first place. It doesn't get any better than that."

And to think, this season started with Brewers fans swooning for something other than baseball. Hank, a cuddly white canine thought to be a bichon frise mix, walked on to the team's spring training facility in Phoenix and turned into a breakout star and unofficial team mascot.

A Hank T-shirt day is planned



for next month, and a "Bobble-Hank" doll giveaway day planned for September is already sold out. But other than the ubiquitous merchandise, Hank-mania for now has retreated to the backroom.

In a way, Hank did his job in the spring by bringing positive national exposure to the Brewers at a time when "candidly there wasn't a lot of buzz about the team," chief operating officer Rick Schlesinger said.

Hank had even relayed the return of slugger Ryan Braun to the team into a footnote. Last July after the break, Major League Baseball handed down its 50-game suspension of Braun as part of the Biogenesis doping scandal.

"Everybody loves a homeless dog. He's a nice pup, and yeah that helped," Schlesinger said when asked if the pup unintentionally became a welcome distraction. "I would say a lot of the factors have helped — but candidly, it's the team playing well."

The season-ticket base contracted following the tough 2013 season, mainly from short-term seat-holders who had signed up after the 2011 playoff run.

No dog days in Milwaukee this summer with the Brewers in the race.

Schlesinger said attendance could finish at between 2.8 million and 2.9 million at its current pace. That would be up from 2.5 million in 2013 and approaching the record of just more than 3 million in the last playoff season of 2011.

"Given what we had in 2013 and even the challenges ... frankly we're so thrilled we're talking about those numbers realistically for the 2014 season," Schlesinger said.

Much will depend, of course, on how the second half plays out.

The Brewers had built a 6½-game lead thanks in large part to a nine-game winning streak in April. Manager Ron Roenicke never expected to run away in a

tough division that included St. Louis, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

But he also thought a pitching staff fortified in the offseason with free-agent Matt Garza would help make the team immune to long losing stretches like the one the Brewers just endured. Milwaukee has lost 11 of 13 since going a season-best 19 games over .500 on June 28.

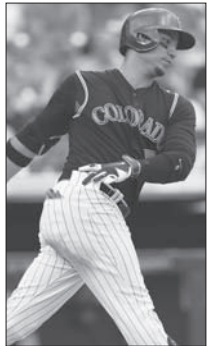
The last game though before the break was a win, a huge confidence boost headed for a struggling team.

"Now, we go into it feeling good and come out of it feeling good," Roenicke said. "It does a lot."

The Brewers this season have also withstood injuries to key players including Braun and Ramirez, though they haven't been sidelined for long stretches like in 2013.

Add in All-Stars, outfielder Carlos Gomez and catcher Jonathan Lucroy, plus emerging hitters Kris Davis and Scooter Gennett, and the Brewers have potent bats up and down the lineup.

"From the leadoff to [the eighth hitter], we have guys who can damage to the opposing team," Gomez said. "This season when you look in general at the team, we are a better team collectively."



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI/AP

The Rockies' Carlos Gonzalez is part of an injury-depleted lineup on its way to a fourth-straight losing season.

Scoreboard

American League

	East Division			
	W	L	Pct	GB
Baltimore	52	42	.553	—
Toronto	49	47	.510	4
New York	47	47	.500	5
Tampa Bay	44	53	.454	9½
Chicago	43	52	.453	9½
Central Division				
Boston	53	38	.582	—
Kansas City	48	46	.511	6½
Cleveland	47	47	.500	7½
Chicago	45	51	.469	10½
Minnesota	44	50	.468	10½
West Division				
Oakland	59	36	.621	—
Los Angeles	57	37	.606	1½
Seattle	49	44	.523	7
Houston	40	56	.417	19½
Texas	38	57	.400	21

National League

	East Division			
	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	51	42	.548	—
Atlanta	52	43	.547	—
New York	45	50	.474	7
Miami	40	50	.448	7½
Philadelphia	42	53	.442	10
Central Division				
Milwaukee	53	43	.552	—
St. Louis	52	44	.542	1
Cincinnati	51	44	.537	1½
Pittsburgh	49	46	.516	3½
Chicago	40	54	.426	12
West Division				
Los Angeles	54	43	.557	—
San Francisco	52	43	.547	1
San Diego	41	54	.432	12
Colorado	40	55	.421	13
Arizona	40	56	.417	13½

Wednesday's games

No games scheduled

No games scheduled

Friday's games

Texas (Darvish 8-5)	at	Toronto (Dickey 7-9)
Cleveland (Bauer 3-4)	at	Detroit (A.Sanchez 6-3)
Cards City (Shields 9-5)	at	Boston (Buchholz 4-5)
Houston (Feldman 4-6)	at	Chicago White Sox (Quintana 5-7)
Sampa Bay (Cobb 4-6)	at	Minnesota (Gibson 8-7)
Baltimore (Tillman 7-5)	at	Oakland (Santana 7-6)
Seattle (Iwakuma 8-4)	at	L.A. Angels (Weaver 10-6)
Philadelphia (Udecided)	at	N.Y. Yankees (Lirio 1-7)
Colorado (Lohse 9-4)	at	Washington (Strasburg 7-6)
San Francisco (Bumgarner 10-7)	at	Milami (Eovaldi 5-4)
Philadelphia (A.Burnett 6-8)	at	Atlanta (Santana 7-6)
L.A. Dodgers (Haren 8-6)	at	St. Louis (Lirio 1-7)
Chicago Cubs (Jackson 5-10)	at	Arizona (Gibson 8-7)
N.Y. Mets (Colon 8-8)	at	San Diego (Kendry 7-6)

Calendar

July 18	Deadline for amateur draft picks to sign.
July 27	Hall of Fame inductions, Cooperstown, N.Y.
July 31	Last day to trade a player without securing waivers.
Aug. 12-14	Owners' meetings, Baltimore.
Aug. 11	Active rosters expand to 40 players.
Oct. 30	Postseason begins.
Oct. 22	World Series begins.

Rockies on pace for another losing season

By PAT GRAHAM

The Associated Press

DENVER — The recent fury of Colorado Rockies owner Dick Monfort wasn't directed at his front office or even his players, just his paying customers.

He lashed out at fans who were bashing the bad baseball at Coors Field, suggesting to one in an email exchange that maybe Denver doesn't deserve a major league team anymore.

Monfort issued an apology and said that relocating the Rockies "has never been, and will never be an option."

Outfielder Carlos Gonzalez understands his owner's exasperation. He feels it, too, in a season that's turned sour.

At 40-55, the injury-riddled Rockies are on course for their fourth straight losing season. They trail the NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers by 13 games at the All-Star break.

"[Monfort] wants to win just like we want to win," said Gonzalez, who returned Friday after missing more than a month with an injured left index finger. "He's a guy that will get in front of us and let us know the way he feels and express himself."

"Fans, they're going to get frustrated, of course. When we don't get results, we get frustrated, too."

After raising eyebrows this spring by predicting a 90-win season, Monfort drew even more attention last week by admonishing some supporters who expressed concerns with the product on the field. Monfort went so far as to suggest they not come out to Coors Field.

He later backtracked, saying "I want to express my sincere apology to Rockies fans that received a recent email response that was not consistent with our organization's values. ... The fact that so many of you take the time to write to us demonstrates your tremendous passion for the Rockies."

The Rockies got off to a fast start, even spending a day — May 7 — tied for first. But they've been beset by injuries and inconsistent play, swooning to a franchise-worst June mark of 8-20 to drop well back of the pack.

"It's certainly disappointing where we're at," said manager Walt Weiss, whose squad leads the major leagues in hitting (.281), but is last in ERA (5.07). "We've had to fight through some tough stuff."

The Rockies have relied on 13 different starting pitchers this season, including prized prospect Eddie Butler, who made a start before going on the disabled list with an inflamed rotator cuff. The starters have earned just five wins over the last 29 games, with ace Jorge De La Rosa accounting for four of them.

Butler's return could help in the second half. Same with Jordan Lyles, who was on schedule to come back from a broken left hand soon after the break, but recent X-rays showed he needed a little more time to heal.

Colorado also has been without some big bats in their lineup, but received a boost with the return of Gonzalez and Nolan Arenado, who missed a month with a broken left middle finger.

Reigning NL batting champion Michael

Cuddyer remains out with a fractured left shoulder. Cuddyer is scheduled to undergo another MRI this week and if all goes well, he said he could soon be out of his sling and back working on his swing. Cuddyer is hoping for a mid-August return.

"It's crazy," Cuddyer said of the team's injury epidemic. "Sometimes, you get snake-bit and unfortunately we have been. Just trying to weather that storm."

With the Rockies scuffling, there will no doubt be some whispers about potential deals as the trade deadline draws near. All-Star shortstop Troy Tulowitzki's name could surface, but he's the cornerstone of this franchise.

Tulowitzki has been healthy this season and leads the league with a .345 average. "I've always treated the trade deadline like reading the National Enquirer," Cuddyer said. "Half of the stuff isn't even true. But it's fun as a fan to watch it and follow it. Until it actually happens, there's no reason to believe any of it."

Gonzalez definitely expects his name to be mentioned, especially now that he's no longer hampered by a finicky finger. He underwent surgery on June 10 to remove a small tumor in the finger.

"Just trying to get better as a player, get healthy and help this club win," Gonzalez said. "We have to concentrate on the little things and don't think about what our record is and who's in first. Just compete every day and try to win series."

MLB



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

San Francisco's Gregor Blanco celebrates a 4-1 win over the Miami Marlins in a baseball game in San Francisco. The small-budget Athletics are baseball's best team at the break in a division featuring some of the highest-paid stars. The Giants are right in the chase for the NL West crown despite some recent stumbles. It's only mid-July and there is already talk of a special October and, perhaps, a Bay Bridge Series with far more significance come fall.

Golden: Bay Area teams could be baseball's best

FROM BACK PAGE

Oakland had its most wins ever before the All-Star break, and its six All-Stars were most for the A's since 1975.

"They've done a great job of stacking this team and this organization with guys who can get the job done at this level," Oakland right fielder Josh Reddick said. "With the last two and now a third year, we're proving that we're here to be a true competitor and we're showing that with the best record in baseball right now. It gives us confidence to know that he (Beane) is wanting to go for the whole thing just as much as we are."

In each of the past two Octobers, the Tigers have eliminated Oakland in division series that went the five-game maximum.

The Giants, winners of the 2010 and '12 World Series, missed the playoffs last year and hope they can get back on a roll like the team across the bay. At 52-43, they are one game behind the NL West-leading Los Angeles Dodgers, and Tim Lincecum has won four straight starts for the first time since April 2010.

"No question, the Giants have really established something here for a long period of time," Melvin said. "It's difficult to not only win a World Series, win two out of four, and be in the position they're in right now. It could be

really exciting for the Bay Area."

The Giants are counting on some reinforcements in the second half. Center fielder Angel Pagan and second baseman Marco Scutaro come back from injuries to give San Francisco the roster it envisioned.

It led the NL West by 9½ games when it was 42-21 on June 8, but has struggled since then. The Giants were outscored 19-7 in losing three out of four in their recent interleague series with the A's.

"Their boat's just kind of been going in a steady direction and we're just trying to get ours on that path as well," said Lincecum, who pitched his second no-hitter in 11 months against San Diego on June 25. "You get into those runs and you try to look for how to get out of them and I think it's just doing what you did beforehand, not necessarily putting so much emphasis on getting out of it."

Despite injuries, small crowds and even sewage problems in the home stadium, the A's have found a way to win.

"We've had contributions everywhere," assistant general manager David Forst said. "It's certainly been not unlike any other year where we've had to tinker and turn over the roster as we go. ... The players are unfazed by any changes we make. They just go out and play for three hours a day, and they've played great."

AL East-leading Orioles looking to finish strong

Baltimore alone atop division at break for first time since '97

BY DAVID GINSBURG
The Associated Press

BALTIMORE — Against all logic, the Baltimore Orioles stand alone atop the AL East at the All-Star break for the first time since 1997.

The Orioles endured injuries to three of their best batters, changed closers in the middle of May and began the season with 35 of their first 58 games on the road.

Yet, two years after finally ending a run of 14 straight losing seasons, Baltimore (52-42) reached the season's midpoint four games ahead of second-place Toronto. This is what they had to overcome: Manny Machado missing April recovery from knee surgery; Chris Davis sitting out two weeks with an oblique injury; starting pitcher Bud Norris being sidelined for 17 days with a right groin strain and, worst of all, the loss of catcher Matt Wieters for the season in May after undergoing elbow ligament replacement surgery.

"Given the hand we've been dealt, I think we've handled ourselves really well, especially with the schedule," Davis said. "A lot of teams can say this, but I feel like we had a really tough schedule early on, a lot of road games, a lot of road games in cold places."

Baltimore was 30-28 and 5½ games out of first place after those 35 road games. At that point, Machado hadn't rediscovered his swing, Davis was struggling, J.J. Hardy still hadn't hit his first home run and Zach Britton was just getting used to his new role as closer after Tommy Hunter faltered.

"If you'd have told me in spring training all that was going to happen, I'd say it would be a challenge just to be in contention," Britton said. "It's just a credit to the type of team we have, that some of our big-time players can either be underperforming or injured and we're able to pick up the slack and be in first place at this point."

Much credit should go to executive vice president of baseball operations Dan Duquette, who made several key offseason pickups before doing a strong in-season job of juggling the roster. It's hard to imagine where the Orioles would be without Nelson Cruz, who reached the break with a .287 batting average and a team-high 28 homers and 74 RBIs after signing as a free agent in February.

"I cannot be more blessed to



PATRICK SEMANSKY/AP

Chris Davis and the Baltimore Orioles are alone atop the AL East at the All-Star break for the first time since 1997, despite a string of injuries and a brutal early-season schedule.

be part of this," Cruz said just before the break. "When you have a good season and you're winning, it's everything you can ask for. The last few weeks we showed a lot of heart, a lot of personality as a team. We have a good thing going on here."

Steve Pearce has also been essential to the team's success. Designated for assignment on April 22, the journeyman returned as a free agent on April 29 after Davis' injury. Pearce is hitting .316 with a career-high 11 home runs and 31 RBIs, numbers that are particularly meaningful because Davis has yet to display the form he showed as an All-Star last year, when he batted .286 and led the majors with 53 homers and 138 RBIs.

Davis has only four more total bases than strikeouts (110-106) and is batting .199. One reason why the Orioles are optimistic about the second half is that they can't imagine Davis going through an entire season looking this bad.

"CD, he hasn't been the CD we're accustomed to seeing around here," All-Star outfielder Adam Jones said. "He hasn't been hot at all, but all we need if for him

is to have a big second half and we'll be right in the middle of it."

The Orioles rank second in the majors in home runs and are fourth with a .265 batting average, but sustaining that won't necessarily guarantee their second playoff berth in three years.

"We're going to have to pitch," manager Buck Showalter said. "That would allow us to stay consistent."

Wei-Yin Chen (9-3) has been solid for a rotation that goes six deep. The bullpen has been even better, with Britton registering 15 saves and a 1.30 ERA behind setup-man Darren O'Day (2-1, 1.11).

That bodes well for the final 68 games. The Orioles resume play Friday night with a 10-game swing through Oakland, Los Angeles and Seattle.

"The last two years, our pitching is better in the second half," O'Day said. "The starters get sorted out a little bit, start getting longer starts, and the bullpen gets rested and gets better, too. I know we've got a big West Coast trip coming up, and we've got a tough schedule in the second half. It should be a fun."

BRITISH OPEN

Technological breakthrough

R&A moves to enhance fan experience with wifi, LEDs

By DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

HOYLAK, England — Old Tom Morris would barely recognize the British Open these days.

It's one thing for golf to evolve from gutta percha to polyurethane, from niblicks to hybrids, from hickory to graphite. Now the British Open is all about LED screens, apps and routers. Yes, there are wireless routers affixed to every grandstand at Royal Liverpool.

Leave it to the Royal & Ancient to be on the cutting edge of digital technology among major championships.

The British Open is believed to be the first major golf event to offer wireless in every grandstand, allowing spectators with mobile phone and tablets to watch the BBC coverage, track their favorite player through GPS, and get details through up-to-the-minute scoring updates.

"The experience for our spectators will, I believe, be the best they have ever received," said Peter Unsworth, chairman of the R&A's championship committee.

"Using their own smartphones and tablets, and our ground-breaking Wi-Fi network which is available in every grandstand, they will be able to enjoy live BBC television and radio coverage, live scoring and get news and updates without leaving their seat."

"The information available to our spectators has never been so readily available."

And to think this major only three years ago banned cellphones from the golf course. Now they're telling spectators they're missing out if they don't have them.

"The information available to our spectators has never been so readily available."

Five players who desperately needed mulligans

By DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

HOYLAK, England — Major championships are not a single shot, good (winner) or bad (loser).

The British Open is no exception. Every now and again, golf's oldest major championship is remembered as much for the bad shots as the good ones. And the glory of golf is that there are no second chances. The term "mulligan" began in America, but it can be applied to any championship.

Here are five players in the British Open who wish they could have had one.

5 The whiff: Hale Irwin was going along nicely in the 1983 British Open at Royal Birkdale. He was 6-under for the tournament and had a 12-foot birdie putt on the 14th hole of the third round that he narrowly missed. Irwin reached over to tap in the 2-inch putt when he whiffed.

The putter hit the ground and went over the ball. Irwin was so stunned that he knocked in the next one, retrieved it from the hole and fumbled the ball onto the green. And he was even more shook up by the end of the week.

He finished one shot behind Tom Wat-



PETER MORRISON AND SCOTT HEPPLE/AP

Above: A spectator takes a selfie with Gaerne McDowell of Northern Ireland as he passes along the 13th fairway during a practice round Wednesday at Royal Liverpool. When the tournament was held at the course in 2006, so many fans took photos with their phones that mobile devices were banned the next year. **Right:** Player Ian Poulter monitors two mobile devices on Tuesday.



It was so pleased with the result that it now has installed its own fiber optic network at most of the links courses where it holds The Open, starting with Hoylake.

Malcolm Booth, the R&A's communications director, said the signal is strong enough for as many as 20,000 fans to stream video at the same time.

A popular theme at the R&A over the last two decades has been finding a balance between tradition and technology. R&A chief executive Peter Dawson always thought that would involve only equipment. Now he is trying to grasp a world of live streaming and second-screen channels.

Traditions die hard at the oldest

golf championship in the world, which dates to 1860. Tom Watson, a five-time champion who played his first British Open before Tiger Woods was even born, couldn't help notice some of the changes during a practice round Monday.

"What happened to the yellow scoreboards?" he said.

For starters, the scoreboards changed from yellow to green years ago, but point taken. For the longest time, there was a manual scoreboard behind each green that showed the cumulative score of the players on that hole, and the scores of the group next to play.

Those are gone, replaced by LED screens that now give scores, news updates on the champion-

ship, and even a rules quiz during the practice rounds.

"They're in the modern age," Watson said.

Dawson said former championship committee chairman Jim McArthur was a strong advocate for getting up to speed with digital technology, and it then was turned over to Booth and the communications department.

Oddly enough, it was at Royal Liverpool in 2006 when spectators took so many pictures with their phones that mobile devices were banned the following year. The R&A finally relented on that strict policy in 2012 at Royal Lytham & St. Annes.

Now it has Wi-Fi networks,

routes, live streaming, geofencing. Is there anything still ancient about the Royal & Ancient?

"Me," Dawson said with a smile.

He retires next year after 16 years as chief executive, the last few years filled with technology changes he never imagined. He still likes the balance between old and new. The Open still is played on the same turf where Old Tom Morris and Willie Park Sr. vied for championships. The claret jug has been passed around for 86 years.

"But I think in the modern era," Dawson said, "the way that people now embrace this technology is something that golf also has to embrace."

son. Give him that shot back and he likely is in a playoff.

Irwin closed with a 67, though it became clear it would not be enough. After speaking to reporters after his round, and with Watson having struck a 2-iron onto the 18th green that all but secured the Open title, Irwin said, "Now I get to go see Watson two-putt this thing and make me cry."

4 When Birdie becomes bogey: Tony Jacklin looked like a winner on the 71st hole of the 1972 British Open at Muirfield.

Jack Nicklaus made his charge and closed with a 66, though by now it was clear he would come up short. Jacklin and Lee Trevino were tied for the lead, with a big advantage to Jacklin. The Englishman was just short of the green in two on the par-5 17th. Trevino had made a mess of it and was over the green in four shots.

Jacklin could have used a mulligan on either of his next two shots. His chip was so weak that it settled some 20 feet short of the hole. His putt was so strong that he wound up with a three-putt bogey. Trevino chipped in for par to take the most unlikely lead, and Jacklin was so rattled that he bogeyed the last.

Jacklin never again had a top 10 in the British Open.

3 Bunker mentality: Overlooked about Thomas Bjorn in the 2003 British Open is that he was penalized because of a poor bunker shot — in the first round. The Dane left his shot in the sand on the 17th hole and as he always does after a bad shot, slapped at the sand. Except he was still in the bunker, and thus received a two-shot penalty, making a quadruple bogey.

What cost him the claret jug was three sand shots on Sunday — from the same bunker.

He had a two-shot lead with three holes to play when his tee shot on the par-3 16th rolled into the bunker. His first shot didn't carry far enough and rolled back into the sand. His next shot did the same. Bjorn got out on the third shot and made double bogey. He took bogey on the 17th to fall one shot behind, and he wound up one shot behind Ben Curtis, an American playing in his first major.

2 The putt: For all his colorful clothes, Doug Sanders is best remembered for a simple putt he would love to have back. It would have made him a major champion. It would have denied Jack Nicklaus his first victory at St. Andrews.

In the 1970 British Open, Lee Trevino blew up to a 77 on the final day. Sanders

was in a tussle with Nicklaus, but appeared to have the upper hand. He had a one-shot lead playing the easy 18th hole, and he needed only a two-putt par to win the claret jug. The first putt went about 3 feet by the hole.

Sanders backed off, and then hit a weak stroke that missed. He flipped the putter in the air, a mixture of surprise and disgust. The bogey led to a playoff that Nicklaus won the next day by one shot.

1 Frenchman follies: As much as Jean Van de Velde could have used a mulligan, he was equally a part of bad luck in the final hole at Carnoustie in the 1999 British Open. All these years later, it stands as the greatest collapse in a major, and it likely will for years to come.

Van de Velde had a three-shot lead playing the 18th, hit driver off the tee into the right rough, swung a good lie and elected to hit 2-iron to the green. Once it cleared the burn, the tournament should have been over — except the ball hit the railing on the grandstand, flew back over the burn into tall, thick grass. The rest was history, and so was Van de Velde. His wedge went into the burn. His fifth shot went into a bunker and he had to scramble to make triple bogey.

He wound up losing in a three-man playoff to Paul Lawrie.

BRITISH OPEN/SPORTS BRIEFS



PETER MORRISON/AP

Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy plays out of a bunker on the 16th hole Thursday during the first round in Hoylake, England.

Tiger opens at 3 under

Trails McIlroy by three strokes

By PAUL NEWBERRY
The Associated Press

HOYLAKE, England — Tiger Woods is back at the majors.

Seems like he was never away. After a shaky start to the British Open, Woods ripped through Royal Liverpool on Thursday much as he did eight years ago when he won the claret jug for the third time. A 30-foot birdie from the fringe of the 11th green got him going. Four more birdies in the next five holes carried Woods to a 3-under 69, leaving him just three shots behind Rory McIlroy.

Not bad for a guy playing his first major of the year, who went months without being able to swing a club after back surgery.

"I'm only going to get better," Woods said. "I'm getting stronger, I'm getting faster, I'm getting more explosive. The ball is starting to travel again. And those are all positive things."

For McIlroy, it was another blistering start.

The question now: Can he keep it going? McIlroy took advantage of the prime scoring conditions more than anyone, a 66 putting him in the familiar position of first-round leader. He has played the opening round in a cumulative 55 under par this year, including three 63s and a course-record 64 at last week's Scottish Open.

But McIlroy failed to win any of those events, largely because of what he calls his "second-round thing," an acknowledged mental block that he's struggling to overcome.

His total score on Fridays — 15 over. "Maybe it's having higher expectations going out on a Friday because you shot a

low round," said McIlroy, whose goal now is "to put those expectations aside."

Woods, who has been stuck on 14 major titles for more than six years, is just happy to be playing after March 31 surgery kept him out of the Masters and the U.S. Open.

He bogeyed the first two holes on a mild, sunny day with only a hint of a breeze rippling the flags. Down the stretch, he looked more like the player who went 18 under the last time golf's oldest major was held at this course along the Irish Sea.

"I felt good about a lot of things I did out there," said Woods, who played the back nine in 4-under 33. "Especially coming back after that start I had today, to fight myself back into the championship. I feel pretty good about it."

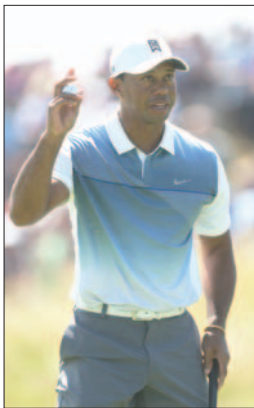
The conditions were a far cry from 2006, when he won on dry, fiery course that made the grass more brown than green. This time, Royal Liverpool was lush and relatively soft after intermittent rain on Wednesday.

Matteo Manassero made only one bogey and also shot 33 after the turn, taking advantage of a quirk in the course which puts three par-5s in the closing nine. He birdied them all for a 67.

He wasn't the only Italian in the thick of things. Brothers Edoardo and Francesco Molinari opened with matching 68s.

"I saw the leaderboard," said Francesco, the younger of the siblings. "But it's a tough course, so you have to focus on what you are doing rather than the others are doing — even if it's your brother."

Also at 68 were Spain's Sergio Garcia and a pair of Americans, Jim Furyk and Brooks Koepka. Another shot back, Woods was joined at 69 by countrymen Rickie



PETER MORRISON/AP

Tiger Woods holds up his ball after putting out on the 11th green at the Royal Liverpool golf club.

Fowler, Jimmy Walker and Boo Weekley; Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, Koumei Oda and Yoshinobu Tsukada; Sweden's Robert Karlsson; and Marc Leishman of Australia.

"I didn't play fantastic, but the course is out there to make some birdies on," said Karlsson, who teed off in the first group of the day at 6:25 a.m.

The wind picked up through the day, making things tougher for those with afternoon tee times.

Briefly

Kristoff wins stage; Nibali retains lead

The Associated Press

SAINT-ETIENNE, France — Alexander Kristoff of Norway, in a solo show of opportunistic racing, won the 12th stage of the Tour de France in a sprint as Vincenzo Nibali kept the yellow jersey for a 10th day on Thursday.

After hitching a ride behind the back wheel of Italian sprinter Matteo Trentin, Kristoff powered out of the barreling pack and beat Peter Sagan of Slovakia, who was second, by nearly a bike length, while Arnaud Demare of France was third. The pack overtook a pair of breakaway riders with less than seven kilometers to go.

Kristoff, who won the Milan-San Remo race this year, pointed his fingers skyward and shouted as he crossed the line — pretty much without any of his Katusha teammates: Sagan's Cannondale team and Giant-Shimano took turns leading the pack at the end. But Kristoff timed his burst perfectly.

The mostly flat 115.5-mile course from Bourg-en-Bresse to Saint-Etienne in southeastern France was well suited for a possible sprint finish.

The top standings didn't change. Nibali leads Richie Porte of Australia by 2 minutes, 23 seconds, and Alejandro Valverde of Spain was third, 2:47 back. Nibali is looking to become the first Italian to win the Tour since the late Marco Pantani in 1998.

Sabres sign Ennis for 5 years

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Buffalo Sabres re-signed center Tyler Ennis on Thursday to a five-year contract worth about \$23 million, addressing one of the final pieces of their offseason rebuilding plan.

A person familiar with the agreement revealed the terms to The Associated Press. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the Sabres referred to the contract only as a multiyear deal.

Ennis was a restricted free agent after the Sabres retained his rights by tendering him an offer last month. Buffalo has now re-signed four of its five restricted free agents, with the exception of forward Luke Adam.

Ennis is a speedy, playmaking forward who led the Sabres with a career-best 21 goals and added 22 assists in 80 games last season.

Royals get Frasor from Texas

ARLINGTON, Texas — The Kansas City Royals have gotten some relief help, acquiring veteran reliever Jason Frasor from the Texas Rangers for Triple-A right-hander Spencer Patton.

The trade was made Wednesday, the same day Patton was scheduled to participate in the Triple-A All-Star game. The Rangers will assign him to Triple-A Round Rock.

Frasor was 1-1 with a 3.34 ERA in 38 appearances this season, his second in Texas. The right-hander spent nine seasons with Toronto (2004-12), returning to the Blue Jays after being traded to the White Sox in July 2011 and finishing that season in Chicago.

In 624 major league games, Frasor is 31-35 with 36 saves and a 3.65 ERA.

The injury-plagued Rangers (38-57) went into the All-Star break with the worst record in the major leagues.

SPORTS

TIM HUDSON
PITCHER

GIANTS

HUNTER PENCE
OUTFIELD

GIANTS

TIM Lincecum
PITCHER

GIANTS

JEFF SAMARDZIA
PITCHEROAKLAND
ATHLETICSBRANDON MOSS
FIRST BASEOAKLAND
ATHLETICSJOSH DONALDSON
THIRD BASEOAKLAND
ATHLETICS

GOLDEN STATE

ILLUSTRATION BY SEAN MOORES
Stars and Stripes

After strong first half for Athletics, Giants, the first Bay Bridge Series since 1989 could be in the cards

By JANIE MCCAULEY
The Associated Press

The small-budget Oakland Athletics have baseball's best record at the break in a division featuring some of the sport's highest-paid stars. The San Francisco Giants are in the chase for the NL West title despite recent stumbles.

Bay Area baseball has delivered a stellar first half. It's only mid-July and there is already talk of a special October and, perhaps, the first Bay Bridge Series since 1989.

California could have four teams playing into October. The two organizations in Northern California have set the tone.

"It'd be hard to find two teams in the same city doing as well as we are," said Giants right-hander Tim Hudson, who began his career with the A's. "It's really exciting for all of the fans from both sides of the bay. They've had the opportunity over the years to have some really fun teams to watch, World Se-

ries-caliber teams every year. New York can't say that, L.A. can't really say that. It's been fun."

Oakland, a major league-best 59-36 and the two-time defending AL West champion, produced a pair of six-game winning streaks behind its reliable starting pitching. And general manager Billy Beane pulled off a July 4 trade with the Cubs that brought Jeff Samardzja and Jason Hammel to a deep rotation that lost Jarrod Parker and A.J. Griffin to season-ending elbow injuries that required surgery.

"We could probably go seven deep," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Tommy Milone's in Triple-A right now and with the numbers he's put up, it means we're creating a lot of depth to withstand whatever could potentially happen coming up in the second half."

Several off-seasons ago, Beane committed to building from the bottom of the minor league system on up to make sure his club had the depth to withstand injuries, and that philosophy is working — even in a talented division that includes Robinson Cano in Seattle and power hitters Josh Hamilton and Albert Pujols of the Angels.

SEE GOLDEN ON PAGE 29

Inside:

- In first at break for first time since '97, O's seek consistency, Page 29
- Brewers go from worst to first in one year, Page 28